Indian Religions

S. Radhakrishnan

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India is the one ancient country which has taken tolerance as the first pre-requisite of the religious quest. Be it Islam, Christianity, or any other religion, it has first of all adopted tolerance and only then roots in this land. There is, therefore, something unique, something quite different, something to be very carefully studied and understood about all the Indian religions.

This compact study by Dr. Radhakrishnan informs about and comments upon the salient features of the various Indian religions, their essential philosophy, their metaphysical views, their world outlook, etc. In fact this is the only work by the celebrated author on all Indian religions and includes his essays on Islam and Christianity.

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan (1888-1975) is a world-renowned author of over two dozen books. After a brilliant academic career, he taught at a number of Indian and foreign universities, and was the Vice-Chancellor of the Benaras Hindu University. He later held high offices in the conduct of India's national and international affairs, culminating in the Presidentship of India.

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The Need for Religion

THE need for religion, for a system of thought, for devotion to a cause which will give our fragile and fugitive existence significance and value does not require much elaborate argument. It is an intrinsic element of human nature. The question is, what kind of religion? Is it a religion of love and brotherhood or of power and hate? Secular ideologies ask us to worship wealth and comfort, class or nation. The question is therefore not, religion or no religion, but what kind of religion.

So long as any religious system is capable of responding creatively to every fresh challenge, whether it comes by the way of outer events or of ideas, it is healthy and progressive. When it fails to do so it is on the decline. The breakdown of a society is generally due to a failure to devise adequate responses to new challenges, to a failure to retain the voluntary allegiance of the common people who, exposed to new winds of thought and criticism, are destitute of faith, though afraid of scepticism. Unless religions reckon with the forces at work and deal with them creatively, they are likely to fade away.

We live in an age of science and we cannot be called upon to accept incredible dogmas or exclusive revelations. It is again · an age of humanism. Religions which are insensitive to human ills and social crimes do not appeal to the modern man. Religions which make for division, discord and disintegration and do not foster unity, understanding and coherence, play into the hands of the opponents of religion.

The general impression that the spirit of science is opposed to that of religion is unfortunate and untrue. One of the main arguments for the religious thesis is the objective consideration of the cosmos. What is called natural theology is based on the study of the empirically observable facts and not from authoritative sources such as revelations or traditions. Those who attempt to construct by reasoned argument a theory of ultimate being from a survey of the facts of nature are adopting the scientific method. The *Brahma Sūtra* which opens with the *sūtra*, *athāto brahmajijñāsā*, now therefore the desire to know Barhman, is followed by the other, *janmādyasya-yataḥ*. Brahman is that from which the origin of this world (along with subsistence and dissolution) proceeds. The *sūtra* refers to the account in the third chapter of the *Taittirīya Upanishad*. There has been a steady ascent from the inorganic to the organic, from the organic to the sentient, from the sentient to the rational life. The rational has to grow into the spiritual which is as far above the purely rational as the rational is above the purely sentient. A spiritual fellowship is the meaning of history. The purpose of the cosmic process is the city of God in and out of time. Earth is the seed ground of the new life of spirit. Earth and heaven are intermingled.[1]

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[1] The vision of a renewed creation finds poignant and expression

The spirit of science does not suggest that the ultimate beginning is matter. We may split the atom. The mind of man which splits it is superior to the atom. The achievements of science stand as witnesses to the spirit in man. The nature of the cosmic evolution with its order and progress, suggests the reality of underlying spirit. I need not refer to the metaphysicians trained in science like Lloyd Morgan, Alexander, Whitehead, and others. Albert Einstein in his book, *The World As I See It*, observes that the scientist's "religious feeling takes the form of a rapturous amazement at the harmony of natural law, which reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection. This feeling is the guiding principle of his life and work, in so far as he succeeds in keeping himself from the shackles of selfish desire. It is beyond question closely akin to that which has possessed the religious geniuses of all ages." Scientists are men dedicated, set apart. They have renounced the life of action. Their life as the pursuit of truth is service of God, who is Truth: *satya svarūpa, satyanārāyaṇa*. Erasmus delivered the great dictum: "Wherever you encounter truth, look upto it as Christianity."

The spirit of science leads to the refinement of religion. Religion is not magic or witchcraft, quackery or superstition. It is not to be confused with outdated dogmas,

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in the Apocalypse of St. John: 'Behold the tabernacle of God with men; and He will dwell with them and they shall be his people and God Himself with them shall be their God.

'And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes and death shall be no more. Nor shall mourning nor crying nor sorrow be any more, for the former things are passed away. And He that sat on the throne: Behold, I make all things new.'

incredible superstitions, which are hindrances and barriers, which spoil the simplicity of spiritual life. Intellectual authority should be treated with respect and not merely inherited authority. Besides, science requires us to adopt an empirical attitude. Experience is not limited to the data of perception or introspection. It embraces para-normal phenomena and spiritual states. All religions are rooted in experience.

Among the relics of the Indus civilization are found figures which are the prototype of Siva, suggesting that he who explores his inward nature and integrates it is the ideal man. This image has haunted the spiritual landscape of this country from those early times till today. The *Upaniṣads* require us to acquire *brahma-vidyā* or *ātma-vidyā*.[2] The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* says that man is turned outward by his senses and so loses contact with himself. He has lost his way. His soul has become immersed in outer things, in power and possessions. It must turn round, *āyrtta-cakṣuḥ*, to find its right direction and discover the meaning and reality it has lost. The Jina is one who conquers his self. He is the *mahāvīra*, one who has battled with his inward nature and triumphed over it. The Buddha asks us to seek enlightenment, *bodhi*. These different religions ask us to change our unregenerate nature, to replace *avidyā*, ignorance, by *vidyā* or wisdom.

Of course, they do not mean by *vidyā* textual learning.

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[2] Some aspects of Greek religion emphasize self-knowledge. Heraclitus said : 'I sought myself.' The injunction to know the self was written over the porch at Delphi. Socrates started his quest by becoming aware that he does not know himself and, indeed, that he does not know anything. When we know that we do not know, we begin to know ourselves.

The man who knows all about the texts is *mantravit*, not *ātmavit*; *nāyamātmā pravacanena labhyo na medhayā, na bahunā śrutena.*[3] 'This self cannot be attained by instruction nor by intellectual power nor through much hearing.' Religion is not mere intellectual conformity or ceremonial piety; it is spiritual adventure. It is not theology but practice. To assume that we have discovered final truth is the fatal error. The human mind is sadly crippled in its religious thinking by the belief that truth has been found, embodied, standardized and nothing remains for us to do except to reproduce feebly some precious features of an immutable perfection. Religion is fulfilment of man's life, an experience in which every aspect of his being is raised to its highest extent. What is needed is a change of consciousness, a rebornness, an inner evolution, a change in understanding.

The distinction between time and eternity is qualitative. No quantity of time can produce eternity—*nāsty akṛtah kṛtena.* Our thought must be lifted to another order of reality above time.[4] The change from reason to spirit is a qualitative one.

There is no such thing as an automatic evolution of man, something that happens according to the laws of heredity and natural selection. Man's evolution is bound up with his conscious effort. As he is, man is an unfinished being. He has to grow into a regenerate being and permit the currents of universal life to flow through him. Those who have evolved, who have realized their

[3] *Katha Upanishad*, I, 2.33

[4] Cf. Spinoza: 'Eternity cannot be defined by time or have any relation to it.'

latent possibilities, who are reborn, serve as examples and guides to others.

This is the teaching of Christianity. Jesus asks us to bring about this rebirth, the second birth, to become a new man. The change takes place by inner contemplation, not outer life. When Jesus rebukes the Pharisees, he is condemning the man of pretences who keeps up appearances, who conforms to the letter of the law. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousress of the Scribes and the Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."[5] We must act not from the idea of reward but for the sake of what is good in itself. To attain heaven which is the higher level of understanding, of being, one has to undergo inner growth, growth in wisdom and stature through prayer and fasting, through meditation and self-control. Jesus says of John the Baptist that he is the best of those born of women but the least in the Kingdom of Heaven was greater than he.[6] John speaks to us of salvation through moral life. He tells us what to *do*, not what to *be*. Jesus insists on inner transformation. John symbolizes the man of external piety. Jesus, the man of inner understanding.[7] John asks us to become better, Jesus asks us to become different, new. John the Baptist was puzzled when he heard that Jesus and his disciples ate and drank and did not fast. They plucked the ears of corn on the Sabbath day. Jesus healed on the Sabbath day. John is still a man born of woman; he has not experienced rebirth. 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.'[8] The writer to the Ephesians says: "Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead."[9] We are like dead people; we should wake up. Christian teaching in its origin, before it became externalized and organized, was about awakening from sleep through the light shed by the inner wisdom. Jesus was one who had awakened and taught others the way of awakening. In this way, says the writer to the Ephesians, "you will redeem the time."[10]

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[5] *Matthew*, V, 20

[6] *Matthew*, III, 2 : *Luke*, III, 10-14

[7] *Luke*, XVII, 20

The Kingdom of Heaven is the highest state attainable by man. It is within us.[11] "He hath set eternity in the heart of man."[12] Man stands between the visible and the invisible worlds. Our ordinary level of consciousness is not the highest form or the sole mode of experience possible to man. To get at the inner experience we must abstract from the outer. We must get away from the tumult of sense impressions, the riot of thoughts, the surgings of emotions, the throbs of desires. Böehme says that we come into the reality of our being and perceive everything in a new relation, "if we can stand still from self-thinking and self-willing and stop the wheel of imagination and the senses." Karl Barth observes: "Men suffer, because bearing within them an invisible, they find this unobservable inner world met by the tangible, foreign, other outer world, desperately visible, dislocated, its fragments jostling one another, yet mightily powerful and strangely menacing and hostile."[13]

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[8] *John*, III, 3

[9] IV, 14

[10] V, 16. William Law following Böehme writes: 'Do but suppose a man to know himself, that he comes into this world on no other errand but to arise out of the vanity of time. Do but suppose him to govern his inward thought and outward action by this view of himself and then to him every day has lost all its evil; prosperity and adversity have no difference, because he receives them and uses them in the same spirit.' *The Works of William Law* (1749), reprinted in 1893, Vol. VII, p. 1

[11] *John*, III, 3

[12] *Ecclesiastes*, III, II

The great scriptures are the records of the sayings of the prophets, *āpta-vacana*. We do not prove the truth of an idea by demonstrating that its author lived or that he was a respectable man. The evidence of truth lies in man's experience of it when it enters into him. The Buddha asks us to accept his words after examining them and not merely out of regard for him.[14]

All religions require us to look upon life as an opportunity for self-realization—*ātmanastu kāmāya*. They call upon us to strive incessantly and wrest the immortal from the mortal. God is the universal reality, wisdom and love and we are His children irrespective of race or religious belief. Within each incarnate soul dwells the god-consciousness which we must seek out and awaken. When mankind awakes to the truth, universal brotherhood will follow, the at-one-ment with the great fountainhead of all creation. One whose life is rooted in the experience on the Supreme spontaneously develops love for all creation. He will be free from hatred for any man. He will not look upon human beings as though they were irresponsible things, means to other people's interests. He will boldly work for a society in which man can be free and fearless, a subject, not an object. He will oppose terror and cruelty and stand by the outcast and the refugee.

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[13] *Commentary on Romans*, p. 306

[14] *Parikṣya bhikṣavo grāhyam madvaco na tu gauravāt.*

He will give voice to those who have no voice. What gives Marxism its immense vitality is the vision of injustice made good, of the poor raised to power and the proud brought low.

Religion in this sense will be the binding force which will deepen the solidarity of human society. The encounter of the different religions has brought up the question whether they could live side by side or whether one of them would supersede the others. Mankind at each period of its history cherishes the illusion of the finality of its existing modes of knowledge. This illusion breeds intolerance and fanaticism. The world has bled and suffered from the disease of dogmatism, of conformity. Those who are conscious of a mission to bring the rest of humanity to their own way of life have been aggressive towards other ways of life. This ambition to make disciples of all nations is not the invention of the Communists. If we look upon our dogmatic formulations as approximations to the truth and not truth itself, then we must be prepared to modify them if we find other propositions which enter deeper into reality. On such a view it will be illogical for us to hold that any system of theology is an official, orthodox, obligatory and final presentation of truth.[15] Reality is larger than any system of theology, however large.

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[15] Cf. Charles E. Raven: It is precisely this claim to an absolute finality in the Church or the Scriptures or in Jesus Christ or in anything else, this claim that revelation belongs to a totally different order of reality from discovery or that a creed is something more than a working hypothesis, that perplexes and affronts those of us who have a proper sense of our own limitations.

All great religions preach respect for other ways of life, whatever their practices may be. It is well known that in the East religious feuds have been relatively unknown. Early Christianity was not authoritarian. It was humanistic and tolerant so long as it was the religion of the poor and humble peasants, artisans and slaves, but when it became the religion of the Roman Empire authoritarianism became more prominent. The tension between the two never ceased. It is illustrated by the conflict between Augustine and Pelagius, between the Catholic civilization and the many heretical groups and between the various sects within Protestantism. So long as this attitude persists, intolerance is inevitable. Faith without wisdom, without tolerance and respect for others' ways of life is a dangerous thing. The Crusaders who marched their armies eastward could not conceive it to be possible that the God of Islam might be the same God on whom they themselves relied. The historian of the Crusades, Mr. Steven Runciman, concludes his account with very significant words which have a bearing on the contemporary world situation.

> In the long sequence of interaction and fusion between Orient and Occident out of which our civilization has grown, the Crusades were a tragic and destructive episode. The historian, as he gazes back across the centuries, must find his admiration overcast by sorrow at the witness that it bears to the limitations of human nature. There was so much courage and so little honour, so much devotion and so little understanding. High ideals were besmirched by cruelty and greed, enterprise and endurance by a blind and narrow self-righteousness; and the Holy War itself was nothing more

than a long act of intolerance in the name of God, which is the sin against the Holy Ghost.[16]

The *Qurān* asks us "not to revile those whom others worship besides Allāh lest they, out of spite, revile Allāh in their ignorance."[17] The *Qurān* says: "We believe in God and the revelation given to us and to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus and that given to other Apostles from their Lord. We make no difference between one and another ot them, for we bow to Allāh."[18] Muhammad thought of himselt as one who purified the ancient faith and rid it of the extravagances that had crept into it. The *Qurān* says: "The same religion has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah, which we have sent by inspiration to thee. And that which we enjoined on Abraham, Moses and Jesus, namely that you should remain steadfast in religion and make no divisions therein."[19]

A religion which brings together the divine revelation in nature and history with the inner revelation in the life of the spirit can serve as the basis of the world order, as the religion of the future. Whatever point of view we start from, Hindu or Muslim, Buddhist or Christian, if we are sincere in our intention and earnest in our effort, we get to the Supreme. We are members of the one Invisible Church of God or one Fellowship of the Spirit, though we may belong to this or that visible Church.

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[16] *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. III (1954), p. 480

[17] VI, 108

[18] II, 136

[19] XLII, 13

In all countries and in all religions, there are creative minorities who are working for a religion of spirit. We feel the first tremors of the rebirth of the world. There are several organizations working in the world today—World Congress of Faiths (1936), World Alliance for Friendship through Religion and Church Peace Union (1914), World Brotherhood (1950), World Spiritual Council (1946), Society for the Study of Religions (1924).

Inter-religious understanding which is the aim of this Organization, is native to this country. Aśoka in his twelfth edict proclaimed:

> He who does reverence to his own sect while disparaging the sects of others, wholly from attachment to his own, with intent to enhance the glory of his own sect, in reality, by such conduct, inflicts the severest injury on his own sect. Concord, therefore, is meritorious, to wit, hearkening and hearkening willingly to the law of piety as accepted by other people.

Gandhi said: "I hold that it is the duty of every cultured man or woman to read sympathetically the Scriptures of the world. A friendly study of the world's religions is a sacred duty." We must have the richness of the various traditions. We are the heirs of the heritage of the whole of humanity and not merely of our nation or religion. This view is being increasingly stressed in western religious circles. Archbishop William Temple puts it in a different way:

> All that is noble in the non-Christian systems of thought or conduct or worship is the work of Christ upon them and within them. By the Word of God—that is to say, by Jesus Christ—Isaiah and Plato and Zoroaster and [the] Buddha and Confucius conceived

> and uttered such truth as they declared. There is only one divine light, and every man in his measure is enlightened by it. Yet, each has only a few rays of that light, which needs all the wisdom of all the human traditions to manifest the entire compass of its spectrum.[20]

Dr. Albert Schweitzer observes: "Western and Indian philosophers must not contend, in the spirit that aims at the one proving itself right in opposition to the other. Both must be moving towards a way of thinking which shall eventually be shared in common by all mankind."[21] Professor Arnold Toynbee writes that he would "express his personal belief that the four higher religions that were alive in the age in which he was living were four variations on a single theme and that, if all the four components of this heavenly music of the spheres could be audible on each simultaneously, and with equal clarity to one pair of human ears, the happy hearer would find himself listening, not to a discord, but to a harmony."[22] In an article in *The Observer*, October 24, 1954, he writes that "this Catholic-minded Indian religious spirit is the way of salvation for human beings of all religions in an age in which we have to learn to live as a single family if we are not to destroy ourselves." When the religions begin to fertilize one another, they will supply the soul for which this world is seeking.

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[20] *Readings in Saint John's Gospel*, First Series (1939)

[21] George Seaver: *Albert Schweitzer* (1947), p. 276

[22] *A Study of History*, Vol. VII (1954), p. 428

Indian Religious Thought

THE problem of religion arises from the realization of the imperfect condition of man. Life is not merely a physical phenomenon or a biological process. Who shall save me from the body of this death, from the snares and dangers of this world? The need for redemption implies the presence of conditions and circumstances from which we seek escape or liberation.

The fundamental concepts of Indian religious life may be briefly indicated. The goal of life is communion with the Supreme. It is a life of realization, a *gnosis*, an inner intuitive vision of God, when man achieves absolute freedom and escapes from the blind servitude to ordinary experience. It is a subtle interwovenness with the realities of the spiritual world. It is not knowledge or the recognition of universal ideas through a dialectical process or analysis of empirical data. It is analogous to Plato's vision of an irresistible harmony with the deepest reality of the world inspired and sustained by the spiritual in us.

asti brahmeti ced veda parokṣam jñānam eva tat;
asmi (aham) brahmeti ced veda aparokṣam tat tu kathyate.

This brings out the distinction between intellectual recognition and spiritual realization. We can free ourselves from the shackles of the body and in a split second we can see the truth and be overcome by it. We see God so intensely that the soul is more certain and more possessed by the sight of God than the bodily eye by the light of day.

tad viṣṇoḥ paramam padam
sadā paśyanti sūrayaḥ, divīva cakṣur ātatam.

The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* tells us that through *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*, we have to attain *ātma-darśana*[1]: *ātma-darśanam uddiśya vedānta śravaṇa manana nididhyāsanam kartavyam ity arthaḥ.* The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* says:

praṇavo dhanuḥ śaro hy ātmā brahma tal lakṣyam ucyate;
apramattena veddhavyaṁ śaravat tanmayo bhavet.[2]
vedāham etam puruṣam mahāntam ādityavarṇam tamasaḥ parastāt.[3]
anubhūtiṁ vinā mūḍho vṛthā brahmaṇi modate.[4]

Intuition is not emotion but the claim to certain knowledge. It gives us a sense of divine reality as a thing immediately certain and directly known. The sense of God penetrates the seer's consciousness but it does not come like the light of day, something external, something out there in space. The barrier that separates the seer from the divine life is broken down. It is the aim of the seer to live in the light and inspiration of this experience, to be one with God in an abiding union.

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[1] IV, 4-5

[2] II, 2-4

[3] See *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, III, 8; see also III, 21

[4] *Maitreyopaniṣad*, 2

The records of these experiences are the *Vedas*, "ever the same yet changing ever". The *Vedas* which constitute the essential foundation of the entire spiritual tradition of India are based on integral experience. The term *Veda*, derived from the root *vid* refers to a doctrine based not on faith or revelation but on a higher knowledge attained—through a process of intuition or seeing. The *Vedas* are seen by the *ṛṣis*, the seers of the earliest time. The *Vedas* do not give us theories or theologies. The hymns contain reflection of a consciousness that is in communion with metaphysical reality. The gods themselves are not mere images but projections of the experience of significance, of forces directly perceived in man, in nature, or beyond. The *Vedas* are neither infallible nor all-inclusive. Spiritual truth is a far greater thing than the scriptures. We recognize the truth and value of much that has been proclaimed by non-*Vedic* prophets and we are led equally to perceive the insight of many religious teachers in later centuries. The *Veda* is a record of inspired wisdom and deep inner experience.[5]

The second factor is the emphasis on the divine possibilities of man. The great text, *tat tvam asi* stresses this truth. The Supreme is in the soul of man. For the *Upaniṣads*, as for Plato[6] and Philo,[7] man is a celestial plant.

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[5] *tad vacanād āmnāyasya prāmāṇyam.—Vaiśeṣika Sūtra*

[6] Timaeus, 90

[7] *De plantatione*, sec. 17; cf. Seneca: "The place which God occupies in this world is filled by the spirit in man."

Godhead can be described and approached in various ways. The Hindu thinkers were conscious of the immensity, the infinity, the inexhaustibility and the mysteriousness of the Supreme Spirit. A negative theology develops. Brahman is a reality which transcends space and time and so is greater than human understanding can grasp. *śānto' yam ātmā.* Brahman is silence. Yet Brahman is the continuing power which pervades and upholds the world. He is the real of the real, the foundation on which the world rests. He is essential freedom. His different functions of creation, preservation and perfection are personalized in the forms of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. The individual deities are affiliated to one or the other. When approaching the different conceptions and representations of the Supreme, the Hindu has a sense of humility, a deep awareness of human frailty. Even if religions claim to be results of divine revelation, the forms and contents are necessarily the products of the human mind.

> *eṣa devo viśvakarmā mahātmā sadā janānāṁ hṛdaye sanniviṣṭaḥ*
> *hṛdā maīṣā manasābhikḷpto ya etad vidur amṛtās te bhavanti.*[8]

Religion reflects both God and man. As religion is a life to be lived, not a theory to be accepted or a belief to be adhered to, it allows scope and validity to varied approaches to the Divine. There may be different revelations of the Divine but they are all forms of the Supreme. If we surround our souls with a shell, national pride, racial superiority, frozen articles of faith and empty presumption of castes and classes, we stifle and suppress the breath of the spirit. The *Upaniṣads* are clear that the flame is the same even though the types of fuel used may vary. Though cows are of many colours their milk is of one colour; the truth is one like the milk while the forms used are many like the cows.[9] Again, the *Bhāgavata* says even as the several senses discern the different qualities of one object, so also the different scriptures indicate the many aspects of the one Supreme.[10]

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[8] *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, IV, 17

In the *Upaniṣads* we find a four-fold status of the Supreme Reality—*ātmā catuṣpāt*, Brahman, Īśvara, Hiraṇyagarbha and Virāj. While the world is the form of the divine, *viśvarūpa*, the cause is three-fold; *pādo'sya sarvā bhūtāni tripādasyāmṛtaṁ divi.*[11]

The problem facing man is the conflict between the divine and the undivine in him. *Yoga-sūtra-bhāṣya* says that the stream of mind flows in two directions, the one leading to virtue, the other to vice: *citta-nāḍī nāma ubhayato vāhinī, vahati kalyāṇāya, vahati ca pāpāya.*[12] To overcome the conflict and integrate the personality is the aim of religion. This problem has no meaning for beasts and gods, as Aristotle says. It concerns the human predicament.[13]

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[9] *gavām aneka varṇānām kṣīrasyāsty eka varṇatā*
kṣīravat paśyate jñānaṁ liṅginas tu gavāṁ yathā.

[10] *yathendriyaiḥ pṛthag dvāraiḥ artho bahu-guṇāśrayaḥ*
eko nānā īyate tadvat bhagavān śāstra-vartmabhiḥ.

[11] *Ṛg Veda*

[12] I, 12

[13] *dvau eva cintayā muktau paramānande āplutau*
yo vimūḍho jaḍo bālo yo guṇebhyaḥ paraṁ gataḥ.

Two are free from care and steeped in bliss: the child inert and ignorant and he who goes beyond the (three-fold) attributes.

Cf. Śaṁkara: *nistraiguṇye pathi vicaratāṁ ko vidhiḥ ko niṣedhaḥ.*

There are different recognized pathways by which the duality is overcome and perfection reached. In order to see in the world of spiritual reality, we must close our eyes to the world of nature. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* says that man is turned outward by his senses and so loses contact with his own deepest self. His soul has become immersed in outer things, in power and possessions. It must turn round to find its right direction and find the meanings and realities it has missed.[14] To hear the melodies of spirit, we must shut off the noise of the world. This is not to renounce the powers of sight, hearing and speech. It is to open the inner eye to spiritual realities, capture the sounds that come from the world of spirit, sing in silence the hymn of praise to the Supreme Being.

True religious life must express itself in love and aim at the unity of mankind. Bead necklaces, rosaries, triple paint on forehead, or putting on ashes, pilgrimages, baths in holy rivers, meditation, or image worship do not purify a man as service of fellow-creatures does.[15] The Hindu dreamed of universal peace and clothed his dreams in imperishable language:

mātā ca pārvatī devī pitā devo maheśvaraḥ
bāndhavāḥ śivabhaktāś ca svadeśo bhuvana-trayam.:
udāra-caritānām tu vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam
vārāṇaśī medinī.

The goal of world unity is to be achieved by *ahiṁsā* which is insisted on by Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. The fact that the Tamil classic *Tirukkural* is claimed by different religious sects indicates its catholicity. Its emphasis on *ahiṁsā* or non-violence in its varied applications, ethical, economic and social, shows the importance which ancient Tamil culture gave to it. *Tirukkural* is used by the Buddhists and the Jains, the Śaivites and the Vaiṣṇavites. It is called *podumurai* or common scripture.

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[14] II, 1, 1

[15] *rudrākṣam, tulasī-kāṣṭham, tripuṇḍram, bhasma-dhāraṇam.*
yātrā ḥ snānānl homāś ca japā vā deva-darśanam
na ete punanti manujam yathā bhūta hite rati ḥ.

The other two works of Tamil literature *Silappathikāram* and *Manimekhalai*, exalt the virtues of chastity and renunciation.

Even Manu intended the message of India to be of universal application:

etad deśa-prasūtasya sakāśād agrajanmanaḥ
svaṁ svaṁ caritraṁ śikṣeran pṛthivyāṁ sarva-mānavāḥ.

All the people of the world would learn from the leaders of this country the lessons for their behaviour.

There is a persistent misunderstanding that we look upon the world as an illusion and this view is attributed to Śaṁkara. The *Brahma Sūtra* clearly makes out that the world is not non-existent, *nābhāva upalabdheḥ*, that it is not a mental aberration, *na svapnādivat*. Of course Śaṁkara affirms that the world is not Brahman. As the manifestation of Brahman it is real only in a secondary sense; it has what is called *vyāvahārika sattā*. By no means is it to be dismissed as utterly unreal. It is different from *prātibhāsika sattā* or illusory existence. Śaṁkara makes out that the world is a progressive manifestation of the Supreme:

ekasyāpi kūṭasthasya citta-tāratamyāt jñānaiśvaryāṇām
abhivyaktiḥ pareṇa pareṇa bhūyasī bhavati.

In this sacred centre, I may mention the following verse:

jagat trayaṁ śāmbhava-nartana sthalī
naṭādhirājo'tra paraḥ śivaḥ svayam

sabhā naṭo raṅga iti vyavasthitiḥ
svarūpataḥ śakti-yutāt prapañcitā.

The three worlds are but the dancing hall of God Śiva. The king of dancers is the Supreme God himself. The audience, actors and the stage are evolved and ordered by the Lord from his own self in association with his *Śakti.*[16]

Though there was no missionary motive, no attempt to convert others to the Hindu faith, its influence extended to other regions like Java, Bali, where we still have a Hindu colony, and other parts of the East. Greek leaders like Heliodorus became devotees of the Hindu faith. While missionary religions carry out propaganda and are interested in the increase of the number of their followers, Hindu religion was not what we call a proselytizing religion, though in its great days it had no objection to foreigners accepting the Hindu faith.

II

Buddhism which arose in India was an attempt to achieve a purer Hinduism. It may be called a heresy of Hinduism or a reform within Hinduism. The formative years of Buddhism were spent in the Hindu religious environment. It shares in a large measure the basic presuppositions of Hinduism. It is a product of the Hindu religious ethos. But soon it established itself as a distinctive religious tradition. It split early into two branches, though the nature of its thought and teaching is common to its different expressions. The Hīnayāna is the southern, Pali or Theravāda Buddhism; the Mahāyāna is the northern, mainly Sanskrit Buddhism. Both groups claim that they are loyal to the teachings of the Buddha. The former is more monastic than the latter. Mahāyāna has been more sensitive to the religious yearnings of the people. While Hīnayāna places its emphasis on individual attainment of salvation, the Mahāyāna emphasizes the grace of the Divine. It is sometimes contended that the Mahāyāna Buddhism reveals a stage of truth greater than that which the Buddha gave to his Pali scriptures as they were not spiritually mature to receive the higher stage of truth.

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[16] *Soma-stava-rāja*, verse 40. Cf. also Śriharṣa: *tad eva rūpaṁ ramaṇīyatāyāḥ kṣaṇe kṣaṇe yan navatām vidhatte:* That beautiful form appears fresh and different every moment.—*Naiṣadha*

The name Buddha means the Awakened One, from the root *budh*, to awaken. The Buddha is one who attained spiritual realization. He gives us a way based on clear knowledge, or awakening. Buddhism is a system of spiritual realization. So in Buddhism personal realization is the starting point. The religious experience of the Buddha is the fundamental source of the religious knowledge of the Buddhists. *Udāna* says that he who attains final knowledge fulfils the vow of celibacy, he is the Brāhmaṇa who has the right to declare the truth.[17]

From his experience of enlightenment, *bodhi*, the Buddha derived his doctrines. The four-fold truth, the nature of man and the character of the world, the cause of his predicament, the way by which man may rise above it and the state of enlightenment or release from subjection to time are the results of his own experience of truth. The Buddha shared with men those aspects of his experience which can be expressed in words. The state of enlightenment is beyond definition or description. The

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[17] *vedānta-gu vuṣita-brahma-cariyo. dharmeṇa sa brahmavādam vadeyya.*

Buddha refused to speculate on the nature of transcendent reality. Each of us has to follow in the footsteps of the Buddha who blazed the path. Each individual has to attain the experience by his own individual effort. Only when the individual himself experiences enlightenment, he is said to know the truth or be enlightened. He is then freed from the shackles of earthbound existence and becomes divine. The scriptures, the Pali *Tripiṭakas*, are the sources for the knowledge of truth, since they record the Buddha's teachings. They are *Buddha-vacana*. The seekers of the past and the masters of the present attained salvation by devotion to the path revealed by the Buddha and placing their trust in him.

The Buddha stresses the possibility and need for each individual attaining the truth. Hīnayāna holds that the experience of enlightenment which was realized by the Buddha is attainable by other human individuals if they follow the path in his footsteps. Every individual has in him the possibility of becoming an *arhat*, who is superior to time and has conquered the world. The Mahāyāna adopts the ideal of *Bodhisattva* who, though he has attained release, out of concern and love for mankind lived in the world where he may serve men by bestowing hope and guiding their steps. It preaches universal salvation. In Hīnayāna the founder of Buddhism is worshipped as the Divine. The other deities worshipped by men pay homage to the Buddha. He is said to be the instructor not only of men but of gods. He is to be adored as the saviour of men through the truth which he exemplified in his life. In the Mahāyāna, the earthly Buddha is the eternal Buddha who reveals himself in all worlds. Gautama Śākyamuni is an earthly incarnation of the Eternal Buddha who exists in countless worlds. All things are subject to him. All existences are the results of his creation. The nature of Godhead which has developed in the Mahāyāna is analogous to the Hindu conception. According to the doctrine of the *Trikāya*, the *Dharmakāya* or the body of Dharma is the ultimate first principle, the Divine from which all things proceed and to which they all return. It is the ultimate Godhead completely transcendent to the world. The next category of the Divine is the *Sambhogakāya*, the body of bliss or enlightenment. This answers to the personal God, who is the creator and preserver of the universe. He is the deity worshipped by man. *Nirmāṇakāya* is the manifestation of the Divine on earth. It is the Divine incarnate in human life and history for the purpose of making the Divine known to man. Mahāyāna Buddhism has scope for the gracious saving power of the Divine. It is not merely by human effort but by divine grace that man attains salvation.

The Buddha recognizes diverse ways to reach the truth. But when the truth is attained, the way falls away. One need not insist that it is the only way to reach the truth. The Buddha gives us the parable of the raft. Any person who wishes to cross a dangerous river having built a raft for this purpose would indeed be a fool if, when he had crossed, he were to put the raft on his shoulders and take it with him on his journey.[18] In China when the followers of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism meet and exalt their own religion, they conclude with the chorus: "Religions are many, reason is one; we are all brothers."[19] Prince Shotuko of Japan (seventh century A.D.) reconciled Shintoism, Confucianism and Buddhism:

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[18] *Majjhima Nikāya*, XXII. Cf. the *Upaniṣad:*
śāstrāṇy abhyasya medhāvī jñāna-vijñāna tat paraḥ
palālam iva dhānyārthī tyajet granthān aśeṣataḥ.

The wise one studies the scriptures intent on understanding their significance and (having found it) throws away the books as he who seeks the grain throws away the chaff.

> Shinto is the source and root of the Way, and shot up with the sky and the earth, teaches man the Primal Way; Confucianism is the branch and foliage of the way, and bursting forth with man, it teaches him the Middle Way; Buddhism is the flower and fruit of the Way, and appearing after man's mental powers matured, teaches him the Final Way. Hence to love one in preference · to another, only shows man's selfish passion . . . indeed each new creed enlightens the old.[20]

According to the Buddha's Four-fold Truth, the nature of human existence is said to be of a fugitive and fragile character. This did not mean for the Buddha a world-negating creed with no concern for temporal affairs. The Buddha is not only the discoverer of truth but also its revealer to mankind. He shares with men the truth which he has attained. He shows men the way by which truth may be found. The middle path of religious realization is not only the end of religion but also the means by which truth is attained. The means of attaining the goal participates in the nature of the goal itself. The ethical means and the spiritual end cannot be separated. The end of enlightenment enters into the means. It is impossible for a people who despise the world to produce the art and culture which enriches our world. Buddhism does not cause men to turn from the pursuits and endeavours of human life.

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[19] J. Estlin Carpenter: *The Place of Christianity in the Religions of the World*, p. 60

[20] Inazo Nitobe: *Japan* (1931), p. 370

Buddhism purports to be a universal religion applicable to all mankind. In the Mahāyāna, not only one's personal salvation but that of all creatures is stresssed. Through their infinite love for struggling humanity, the *Bodhisattvas* elect to postpone the final bliss of nirvāṇa to which they are entitled so that they may continue the unending labour of saving the souls of all since all are destined for Buddhahood.

The Buddha entrusted to his followers the propagation of his doctrine. Under the patronage of Aśoka who became a convert to Buddhism, repenting bitterly the carnage involved in the conquest of Kalinga, Buddhism became widespread in India. Aśoka ordered to be carved in stone columns and rocks the precepts of Buddhism. He enjoined his 'children', i.e. his people, to love one another, to be kind to animals, to respect all religions. This zealous Emperor, 'beloved of the gods', *devānām priya*, had relations with the countries of the Mediterranean and West Asia. He sent abroad missionaries to spread the Buddhist gospel. Tradition has it that his own son carried the doctrine to Ceylon. It has spread to many other lands from Afghanistan to Japan. It is a supra-regional religion. In the process of its expansion Buddhism absorbed into itself the traditions and cultures of the different areas which have accepted its message. While accepting the beliefs and practices of the native peoples, it has helped to refine them.

III

According to Jainism, a Tīrthankara is one who provides the ship to cross the world of *saṁsāra*. The ship is the dharma. The Tīrthankara is the *arhat*, the object of worship. Such a person revitalizes the dharma of the world. By destroying the four karmas, he attains the four eminent qualities of *ananta-jñāna*, infinite knowledge, *ananta-darśana* or infinite perception, *ananta-vīrya* or infinite power, *ananta-sukha* or infinite bliss. Endowed with these qualities he becomes an omniscient being who spends the rest of his life in the world for the good of mankind. When the self realizes its true nature it is freed from subjection to time or as it is said, it is released from rebirth. He becomes *siddha parameṣṭi*, the perfect being. The *siddha* is worshipped because he represents the final spiritual perfection. The *arhat*, the *siddha*, the sangha and the dharma are the four objects of supreme value worthy of adoration. Jainism emphasizes the potential divine stature of man and its teaching claims to be of universal application.

IV

In Zoroastrianism there is a dualism, an open struggle between two forces. Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu are the two warring principles and in their struggle is grounded the drama of cosmic life and human history. The one is the principle of light, justice and the good; the other is the principle of darkness, injustice and evil. The battle between these two is decided by the victory of the good. Before the triumph of light over darkness is complete, the universe and mankind must pass through endless cycles of exhausting torment and untiring strife. Man in the world is confronted by the choice between the two principles. Since the conflict between the two principles is universal as to space and time, the choice which man must make is not differentiated and delimited by empirical boundary stones. As a matter of course, those who are called to be followers of Ahura Mazda form among themselves bonds of spiritual solidarity, having nothing to do with empirical relations between them, relations derived from considerations of race, political allegiance and racial groups. The doctrine is a universalist one. The *Avesta* says:

> The souls of the faithful of both sexes in the Aryan countries, the Turanian countries, the Sarnatian countries, the Syrian countries, the Dacian countries, in all countries—all these do we venerate.[21]

Here we have an explicit definition of a universal religious community which supersedes all distinctions of race, caste and nationality. A believer wheresoever he be found, is an object of veneration. In the Zoroastrian sense, a believer is one who, irrespective of his political allegiance and earthly origin, becomes a follower of Ahura Mazda in the pursuit of justice and peace.

Zarathustra teaches: "And we worship the former religions of the world devoted to righteousness."[22]

V

Persia, though defeated at Marathon and Salamis, exerted a powerful influence on the post-exilic Hebrew prophets and the Hellenic world. Immediately after the two great Athenian victories over the army and the navy of the Persians, a vast transformation is apparent in Hellenic religious life, due to the penetration of Indian and Zoroastrian ideas. Professor Flinders Petrie, the great Egyptologist, in his excavation of Memphis, the capital of ancient Egypt, discovered in the Persian strata of the city, pottery, beads and figures of Indian type. Commenting on it, he writes: "The importance of the Indian colony in Memphis under the Persian empire lies in its bearing on its importation of Indian thought and the rise of the ascetic movement before Christ which culminated in western monachism." Reverend Frank Knight writes: "Monasteries or groups of ascetic devotees living together in a communal form and ordering their lives on rules laid down by Indians were established in Egypt by 340 B.C. It is in many ways probable that Greek Stoicism was not an indigenous Hellenic product, but merely infiltration *via* Egypt of beliefs derived from the Buddhist priests of India.[23] According to Plato, Socrates says:

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[21] Yast, XIII, 143, 144

[22] Yasna, XVI, 3

> When the soul returning into itself reflects, it goes straight to what is pure, everlasting and impartial and like unto itself and being related to this cleaves unto it when the soul is alone and is not hindered. And then the soul rests from its mistakes and is like unto itself even as the Eternal is with whom the soul is now in touch.

This state of the soul is called 'wisdom', what we call

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[23] Quoted in G.S. Ghurye: *Indian Sādhus* (1953), p. 11

jñāna. Dionysius who plays a relatively minor role in the epics of Homer now appears among the Olympian gods on the friezes of the Parthenon. Between the two dates the incursion of the Dionysius mysteries and the transformation of Greek religious life must be placed. This introduces a new mystical element into the traditional religion of the Hellenic world.

The dualism of the Zoroastrian philosophy underlies the Orphic attitude. The empirical world, the world of sense, of existence, is confused and tormented. Through music, contemplation, love, man can liberate himself from the sphere of sensory experience and earn spiritual immortality even now. Thus the religious world of the Greeks became familiar with the concept of spiritual community. The *ecclesia spiritualis* has been a historical reality throughout the centuries. Communities of men who recognize a solidarity unrelated to race, nation, blood, politics, class, or caste, who are bound by a common belief in transcendental values and participation in divine grace sprang up. Heraclitus calls every man a barbarian who heeds only the testimony of his senses to the exclusion of the spiritual harmonies which remain inaccessible to the corporeal ear. The Stoic thinkers declare that all men are brothers by an inescapable law of nature.

VI

The Jewish Bible does not begin with the Jews. It starts with the story of Adam which in Hebrew means man, *admi*. *Genesis* (V,I) says: "This is the book of the generations of man." It does not speak of the Levite, the priest, or the Jew but of men. The children of earth are viewed as one family. They have one ancestor who is the father of all. Distinctions of caste and class differentiation by blood or descent do not supersede the primary fact of human equality. "Why was man created one?" ask the Rabbis and answer: "In order that no man should say to another, 'My father was greater than thine.' "

Though the Jews are said to lay great stress on ceremonial piety, there is also stress on a different attitude to life. Man is made in the image of God. In his ultimate nature man partakes of the divine essence. The *Proverbs* describe the spirit of man as the candle of the Lord, a candle which has to be lit with a divine flame.

Though man is made in the 'image of God', 'the Fall of man' represents the lapse from the state of close relationship with God. Now, man possesses the image of God only potentially and not actually. To conform to the will of the Supreme, personal sanctification is essential. The flame of spirit must be kindled in each human soul. "Thus saith the Lord God. I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them an heart of flesh."[24] "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." It is the aim of the Jews to create a broken and a contrite heart for God will not despise it.

For creating a new man and a new world, a 'turning of the soul' is essential. The soul of man is seen as 'the lamp of God, searching out all the recesses of the inward parts'. God said to Moses, according to *Exodus*: "Thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see me and live." When the Covenant of God is written in the heart of man, the transcendent will become completely immanent. "I have said, ye are gods and all of you are children of the Most High." (*Psalms)*

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[24] Ezekiel, II, 16, 19

The Hebrew Bible will not compromise with idolatry. "Thou shalt have no other gods but me." Tacitus says: "The Jews condemn as impious all who, with perishable materials wrought into the human shape, form representations of the deity. That Being, they say, is above all and eternal, given neither to change or decay."[25] Philo quotes a letter written to Caligula by king Agrippa of Judaea in which it is said:

> O my Lord and master, Gaius, this temple has never, from the time of its original foundation till now, admitted any form made by hands, because it has been the abode of God Now pictures and images are only imitations of those gods who are perceptible to the outward senses; but it was not considered by our ancestors to be consistent with the reverence due to God to make any image or representation of the Invisible God.[26]

The Jews do not admit into their temple any image or representation made by hands, no visible likeness of him who is Invisible Spirit. They stress the transcendence of God.

The great Commandment of the Jews is to "love thy neighbour as thyself." In *Leviticus* XIX, where we find a commentary on this principle, it is said:

> Let there be no hate in your heart for your brother;

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[25] *Hist.*, V, 5

[26] Quoted by Leon Roth: *Jewish Thought as a Factor in Civilization* (1955), p. 25

> but you may make a protest to your neighbour so that he may be stopped from doing evil. Do not make attempts to get equal with one who has done you wrong, or keep hard feelings against the children of your people, but have love for your neighbour as for yourself. I am the Lord.

This principle applies not only to one's brothers or kinsmen or neighbours but to all. "And if a man from another country is living in your land with you, do not make life hard for him; let him be to you as one of your countrymen and have love for him as for yourself; for you were living in a strange land, in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God." Micah asks: "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God." Moses uttered the prayer: "Would that all God's people were prophets." Isaiah says: "He shall judge between the nations and they shall beat their swords to ploughshares...Neither shall they learn war any more." The weapons of war should be turned to the service of peace. The nations form one family and they are inter-responsible.

VII

Christianity is the religion based on the life and experience of Jesus. The Cross becomes significant only when we make it our own, when we undergo crucifixion. Jesus bids us to walk the path which he trod, that we may share the union with God which he attained. "Seek and ye shall find." Each one must seek for himself if he is to find. The truth latent in every soul must become manifest in the awakened spiritual consciousness. It is Jesus "risen in the hearts of men." Then shall we be able to "work in the newness of life". All things are then made new. Those who raise themselves above their unregenerate condition are the god-men who are the manifestations of the new creation, the promise and pledge of the destiny in store for humanity. There is no one way by which spiritual rebornness is attained. "Marvel not that I have said unto thee, ye must be born again....The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.'[27] In the same spirit it is said: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."[28]

St. Paul says: "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you."[29] "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you."[30] "Ye are the temple of the living God."[31] For Origen, there is a blood-relationship between God and man. Though God is the source of our being, everlasting, transcendent, he is also close to our hearts, the universal Father in whom we live, move and have our being. "Be ye therefore perfect even as your heavenly Father is perfect."[32] Paul, in his *Epistle to the Philippians*, says:

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[27] John, III

[28] II Timothy, III, 16-17

[29] I Corinthians, VI, 19

[30] *Ibid*, III, 16

[31] II Corinthians, VI, 16

[32] Matthew, V, 48

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you, both to will and to do his good pleasure."[33] "Be assured of this as a certain truth, that, corrupt and earthly as human nature is, there is nevertheless in the soul of every man the fire, light, and love of God." (William Law) "He who inwardly enters and intimately penetrates into himself gets above and beyond himself and truly mounts up to God." The vital thing for us is not to hold the creed but to enter into the experience out of which it was developed. Man is an unfinished creation. He is left to seek and achieve completion. "For this purpose the Son of God appeared that he might destroy the works of the devil."[34] It is a war that shakes the whole cosmos; it is waged in the innermost soul of man. Love of God is the easiest way to reach salvation. John says: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar." This love is a new birth, being begotten of God. "Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin because His seed abideth in him and he cannot sin because he is begotten of God," says John. Love conquers the world, all its fears and anxieties. The practice of love is the natural result of awareness of God. Jesus looks upon the least of God's children as oneself. "And all ye are brethern."

"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in *him*. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life, is not of the Father, but of the world." We must love even our enemies. "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone."[35]

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[33] II, 12-13

[34] I John, III, 8

The Cross means physical suffering, earthly defeat but spiritual victory. Through suffering lies the way to liberation. Pascal says that Jesus struggles with death until the end of the world. In this boundless Gethsemane which is the life of the universe, we have to struggle on unto death wherever a heart is seized with despair, wherever an injustice or an act of violence is committed. "Hast thou seen thy brother? Then thou hast seen God." This was the motto which the early Christians had, as reported by Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian. The message is of universal applicability. "God that made the world and all things therein. . . hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth. For in Him we live, we move and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, for we are all His offspring." (St. Paul)

Existentialism first used by Kirkegaard in the technical sense is the doctrine which stresses subjectivity. He holds that subjectivity is truth. It is a protest against Hegelianism which holds that we can reason our way to truth. The riddles of existence cannot be solved by speculative means. For Kirkegaard, truth can be found only by passionate search, by the existential commitment of the whole personality. Truth is inwardness. Kirkegaard says in his *Journals:* "The purpose of this life is. . . . to be brought to the highest pitch of world-weariness." Heidegger asks us to pass from unauthentic existence to authentic existence, from *saṁsāra* to *mokṣa* or nirvaṇa. For Marcel the goal is self-knowledge. It is not a problem to be solved but a mystery to be entered upon reverently.

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[35] John, VIII.7

VIII

Islam affirms that the spread of materialism brings about the downfall of great nations. The decline of the Greeks and of the Persians is ascribed to the spread of godless materialism. Theological controversies divided Christendom, and problems of social justice and brotherhood were neglected. Muhammad affirms the unity of God and the brotherhood of man. The Muslim feels deeply man's insignificance, the uncertainty of his fate, and the supremacy of God. Their poets, prophets and preachers enlarged on the abyss between the Creator and the creature. Though Allah is a being without form and without parts, without beginning or end and without equal, He must be described partially at least if He is to be apprehended by man. He is viewed as a personal being, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent and compassionate.

If one has to live a truly human life, i.e. a religious life he must surrender his thoughts and actions to God.

> O man, Thou must strive to attain to thy Lord a hard
> striving until thou meet Him.
>
> They are losers indeed who reject the meeting of Allah.
>
> They will perish indeed who call the meeting of Allah
> to be a lie.
>
> He regulates the affairs, making clear the sign that you
> may be certain of meeting your Lord.

The Qurān says: 'Whomsoever He willeth, Allah sendeth astray, and whomsoever he willeth He setteth on a straight path." His transforming grace is essential for our effort to draw near to God.

The domestication of foreign elements has been in process throughout the history of Islam. While the barbarians relegated Greek thought to a few monasteries, Muslim scholars translated Greek classics, absorbed Greek thought and transmitted it later to the West where, in the twelfth century, it produced a great intellectual revival. We generally say that the European mind is made by three elements: Greek culture with its contribution of science, art and literature; Roman civilization with its code of political conduct, law and institutions; and Christianity. The first two are common to Islam and Christianity and Islam believes that it has perfected and completed Christianity.

Muhammad recognized the fact that each religious teacher has faith in his own mission, and his vision and experience fulfil the needs of his people.

> There is not a people but a warner has gone among
> them
> And every nation had a messenger.
> And every nation had a guide.
> And certainly We raised in every nation a messenger,
> saying Serve Allah and shun the devil.
> To every nation we appointed acts of devotion which
> they observe.
> For every one of you did We appoint a Law and a way.[36]

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[36] *Qurān*, XXXV, 25; XVI, 37

IX

If there are similarities in the religious experience of mankind, it only means that a common humanity reacts in more or less similar ways to man's encounter with the Divine. The common points to be found in the different manifestations of religion should not lead us to think that they are organized in each religion in the same way. The manner in which these beliefs are correlated varies from one religion to another. Each religion is a living organization of doctrine, worship and practice, has an uniqueness and individuality of its own and changes as a whole in response to the needs of the age. While therefore we indicate the area of agreement, the distinctive arrangement of the basic presuppositions gives the quality to different religions. For our present purpose, it is not necessary to stress the differences which are important and fundamental in some points. Eventhough each sect of a religion claims to be the true representative of its specific religious message, yet all the followers of all the sects feel that they are bound together in a unity. As we are trying to overcome the conflict within each religion where every organized group claims to possess the truth by the recognition of the unity of religion, even so conflicts among religions require to be reconciled, if religion itself is not to be defeated.

The world has bled and suffered from the disease of dogmatism, of conformity, of intolerance. People conscious of a mission to bring humanity to their own way of life, whether in religion or politics, have been aggressive towards other ways of life. The crusading spirit has spoiled the records of religions.

In future there can be only one civilization in the world, for it is no more possible for different civilizations to live in ignorance of one another. The scientific discoveries which have penetrated all parts of the earth are making the world one though the different civilizations live by and cherish their distinctive principles of life. If the world is to be united on a religious basis, it will be not on the basis of this or that religion but by a co-operation among the different religions of the world. If the different religions strive to achieve their common ideals and seek to understand the differences in a sympathetic spirit, the world will be relieved of the misery and fear which now engulf it. The tradition of opposition to one another should yield to co-operation. The conviction of superiority which is natural should not prevent appreciation of other faiths and fruitful interchange among them. Erasmus delivered the great dictum: "Wherever you encounter truth, look upon it as Christianity." We must remember the spirit of this advice when we are wandering in the obscurity of the future. If the message of religions is to be articulated in relation to the problems of our age, we must give up the view that any one religion contains the final, absolute and whole truth, and adopt the Eastern attitude that the faith is realized in historical patterns, though no one of these patterns should regard itself as the sole and exclusive truth for all. We must be on our guard against the enemies of truth, men of fixed ideas and fanaticisms.

Between the believers in the different historical patterns, there exists a hidden common substratum. If we overlook this, we will not be able to overcome nihilism, lack of faith and irreligion.

If we seek for a joyous reconciliation of the members of the human family, we will discern that even heretics have divined some aspect of Godhead. Just as God lets his sun shine on good and evil, He pours forth His loving kindness on all the children of mankind. The witness of the different major religions strengthens the view that religion is the hope of man and can sustain the new world.

bahu-dvārasya dharmasya nehāsti viphalā kriya.[37]

Religion has many doors; the observance of its duties can never be useless. This view makes for the appreciation of religious knowledge, of the beliefs and practices of other peoples. This understanding makes for spiritual fellowship. Within this fellowship, each religion will have scope for full expression. Religious reflection will be stimulated by the knowledge and friendship of others of different religions. We will also have universal ethical standards. Even as the interplay of Jewish, Christian and Muslim in the West has enriched the experience of the West, that of Hindu, Buddhist and Confucian has enriched the experience in the East, so the cross fertilization of ideas among the living faiths of the world will tend to foster and enrich spiritual life. The sign of hope is the perpetual youth of religions, the way in which they renew themselves as the world changes.

Arnold Toynbee says:

> As I have gone on, Religion has come to take a more and more prominent place, till in the end it stands in the centre of the picture...... I have come back to a belief that Religion holds the key to the mystery of

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[37] *Mahābhārata*, Śāntiparva, 174, 2

> existence; but I have not come back to the belief that this key is in the hands of my ancestral Religion exclusively……The Indian religions are not exclusive-minded. They are ready to allow that there may be alternative approaches to the mystery. I feel sure that in this they are right, and that this catholic minded Indian religious spirit is the way of salvation for all religions in an age in which we have to learn to live as a single family if we are not to destroy ourselves.[38]

The choice before humanity is either cooperation in a spirit of freedom and understanding or conflict in an atmosphere of fear, suspicion and jealousy. The future of religion and mankind will depend on the choice we make. Concord, not discord, will contribute to the establishment of spiritual values in the life of mankind. Concord alone is meritorious, said Ashoka: *Samavāya eva sādhuḥ*.

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[38] *A Study of History*, Vol. X, p. 238

The Heart of Hinduism

THE Hindu religion is marked by an eminently rational character. Throughout the bewildering maze of dreamy hopes and practical renunciations, straitest dogmas and reckless adventures of spirit, throughout the four or five millenniums of ceaseless metaphysical and theological endeavour, the Hindu thinkers have tried to grapple with the ultimate problems in a spirit of loyalty to truth and feeling for reality. The Brahmanical civilization is so called since it is directed by the Brahmin thinkers, trained to judge issues without emotion and base their conclusions on the fundamentals of experience.

The feature of the world which led the Hindu thinkers to raise the question of the Real was its passing away. The world open to our objective vision seemed to them an endless surpassing of itself. They asked: Is this passing away all, or does the doom which engulfs things meet its check anywhere? And they answered: There is something in the world which is not superseded, an imperishable Absolute, Brahman. This experience of infinity is given to us all on some occasions, when we catch glimpses of the mighty secret, and feel the brooding presence of the larger Self which mantles us in glory. Even in the tragic moments of life, when we feel ourselves to be poor and orphaned, the majesty of the God in us makes us feel that the wrong and the sorrow of the world are but incidents in a greater drama which will end in power, glory and love. The *Upaniṣads* declare: "If there were no spirit of joy in the Universe, who could live and breathe in this world of life ?" Philosophically, the Real is the self-identical Brahman revealing itself in all, becoming the permanent background of the world-process. Religiously it is envisaged as the Divine Self-consciousness, pregnant with the whole course of the world, with its evolutions and involutions. Throughout its long career, the oneness of the ultimate Spirit has been the governing ideal of the Hindu religion. The Rigveda tells us of one Supreme Reality, *Ekam sat*, of which the learned speak variously. The *Upaniṣads* make out that the one Brahman is called by many names, according to the spheres of reality in which it is seen to function. The conception of Trimūrti arises in the epic period, and is well established by the age of *Purānas*. The analogy of human consciousness, with its threefold activity of cognition, emotion, and will, suggests the view of the Supreme as *sat*, *cit*, and *ānanda*—reality, wisdom, and joy. The three gunas of *sattva* or equanimity, born of wisdom, *rajas* or energy, which is the outcome of spirited feeling, and *tamas* or heaviness, due to lack of enlightenment and control, are aspects of all existence, and even God is not considered to be an exception to this law of the triplicity of all being. The three functions of *srishti* or creation, *sthiti* or maintenance, and *laya* or destruction are traced to the three gunas of *rajas*, *sattva*, and *tamas*. Viṣṇu, the preserver of the universe, is the Supreme Spirit dominated by the quality of *sattva;* Brahmā, the creator of the universe, is the Supreme dominated by the quality of *rajas*; and Siva, the destroyer of the universe, is the Supreme dominated by the quality of *tamas*. The three qualities of the one Supreme are developed into three distinct personalities. And each of the latter is said to function through its own respective *śakti* or energy, and so we have—answering to Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva,—Umā, Saraswatī, Lakshmī, and their *śaktis*—strictly speaking, all these qualities and functions are so well balanced in the one Supreme that it cannot be said to possess any quality at all.[1] The one incomprehensible God who is omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent appears to different minds in different ways.[2] An ancient text says that forms are given to the formless Absolute for the benefit of the aspirants.

With the openness of mind characteristic of the philosophical temper, the Hindus believe in the relativity of the creeds to the general character of the people who profess them. Religion is not a more theory of the Supernatural which we can put on or off as we please. It is an expression of the spiritual experience of the race, a record of its social evolution, an integral element of the society in which it is found. That different people should profess different faiths is not unnatural. It is all a question of taste and temperament. *Ruchīnām vaichitryat.* When the Aryans met the natives of the soil, who were worshipping all sorts of deities, they did not feel called upon to supplant their

[1] *Rajoguṇaḥ smrito brahmā, viṣnoḥ sattvaguṇātmakaḥ, tamogunaḥ statha rudro, nirguṇaḥ parameswaraḥ.*

[2] *Cf.* Ps. XVIII, 25-26

faiths all on a sudden. After all, all men are seeking after the one Supreme. According to the *Bhagavadgītā*, God will not refuse the aspirant's wishes, simply because they have not felt the power of His highest nature. Any attempt at a rapid passage from one set of rules to another would involve a violent breach with the past, and consequently confusion and chaos. The great teachers of the world who possess a sufficient sense of the historical do not attempt to save the world in their own generation by forcing their advanced notions on those who cannot understand or appreciate them. Even so exacting an ethical teacher as Jesus implicitly justified Moses for legally demanding from the Israelites something less in the matter of divorce than the highest ideal required—because of the hardness of their hearts. Look at the uncompromising words of Mark x. 11 ff. and Luke xvi. 18, and the saving clauses introduced in Matthew v. 32 and viv. 9. The Hindu thinkers, while they themselves practised a very high ideal, understood the unreadiness of the people for it, and so took to careful tending instead of wild forcing. They admitted the lower gods whom the masses ignorantly worshipped, and urged that they were all subordinate to the one Supreme. "While some men find their gods in the waters, others in the heavens, others in the objects of the world, the wise find the true God, whose glory is manifest everywhere, in the Ātman." Another verse says: "The man of action finds his God in fire, the man of feeling in the heart, the feeble-minded in the idol, but the strong in spirit find God everywhere."[3]

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[3] "*Apsu dėva manuśyānām, divi dėva manīśīnām | batānām kaśtalośteśu buddhastvatmani devatāh || Agnau kriyāvato dėvo, hṛdi devo*

Hindu systems of philosophy and religion recognise the periodical evolution and involution of the world representing the systole and diastole of the one universal heart, which is ever at rest and ever active. The whole world is a manifestation of God. Sayana observes that all things whatsoever are vehicles for the manifestation of the Supreme Spirit.[4] These beings are distinguished into different grades. "Amongst beings, those that breathe are high; amongst these, they that have developed minds; among them, those that use their knowledge; while the highest are those that are possessed by the sense of the unity of all life in Brahman."[5] The one foundational Spirit is revealing itself throughout these divergences of form.

The infinite in man is not satisfied by the fashion of the finite world that passes away. Our troubles are due to the fact that we do not realise the God in us. Freedom is our possession, if we escape from all that is transient and finite in us. The more our life manifests the infinite in us, the higher are we in the scale of beings. The most intense manifestations are called the avatars or the incarnations of God. These are not out of the way, miraculous revelations of God, but only higher manifestations of the supreme principle, differing from the lower general ones in degree only. The *Gītā* says, though God lives and moves in all, He manifests Himself in a special degree in things which are splendid. The *Ṛṣis* and the Buddhas, the Prophets and the Messiahs, are intense revelations of the

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maniṣinām | pratimāsvalpabuddhīnām, jñānīnām sarvataḥ śivaḥ." See Bhagavan Das: *Vaidika Dharma,* which has a number of relevant texts.

[4] *Paramātmanaḥ sarvepi padārthaḥ avirbhavopadheyah.*

[5] *Manu,* I.

universal Self. The *Gītā* holds out a promise that they will appear whenever they are needed. When the downward materialist tendency dominates life, a Rama or a Krishna, a Buddha or a Jesus comes upon the scene to restore the disturbed harmony of righteousness. In these men who break the power of sense, unseal the heart of love, and inspire us with a love of truth and righteousness, we have intense concentrations of God. They reveal to us the way, the truth, and the life. They, of course, forbid the blind worship of themselves, since it retards the realisation of the great Self. Rama considers himself to be nothing more than a son of man.[6] A Hindu who knows anything of his faith is ready to offer homage and reverence to all helpers of humanity. He believes that God may be incarnated in any man, even as He was in Jesus or Buddha. If the Christian thinkers admit that men may have access to God and be saved, other than through the mediatorship of Jesus, the Hindu will heartily subscribe to the essential features of the religion of Jesus. The divine manifestation is not an infringement of man's personality. On the contrary, it is the highest possible degree of man's natural self-expressions since the true nature of man is divine.

The aim of life is the gradual revelation in our human existence of the eternal in us. The general progress is governed by the law of *Karma* or moral causation. The Hindu religion does not believe in a God who from His judgment-seat weighs each case separately and decides on its merits. He does not administer justice from without, enhancing or remitting punishment according to His sweet will. God is *in* man, and so the law of *Karma* is organic to man's nature. Every moment man is on his trial, and every honest effort will do him good in his eternal endeavour. The character that we build will continue into the future until we realise our oneness with God. The children of God, in whose eyes a thousand years are as a day, need not be disheartened if the goal of perfection is not attained in one life Rebirth is accepted by all Hindus. The world is sustained by our errors. The forces that integrate creation are our broken lives which require to be renewed. The universe has appeared and disappeared times without number in the long past, and will continue to be dissolved and reformed through unimaginable eternities to come.

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[6] *Atmanām manusham manye ramam dasarathātmajam.* "And call no man your father on the earth: for one is your father, even he who is in heaven." Matthew XXIII.; *cf.* Mark X, 18.

Religious Experience

The effort of religion is to enable man to realise the divine in him, not merely as a formula or a proposition, but as the central fact of his being, by growing into oneness with it. The way to reach this religious experience cannot be prescribed. The soul of man whose nature is infinite has unlimited possibilities in it. The God whom it seeks is equally infinite and wide. The reactions of an infinite soul to an infinite environment cannot be reduced to limited forms. The Hindu thinkers recognise that the exhaustless variety of life cannot be confined to fixed moulds. A familiar text declares: "As the birds float in the air, as the fish swim in the sea, leaving no traces behind, even so are the paths to God traversed by the seekers of spirit."[7] The

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[7] On this whole question, see the chapter on the *Bhagavadgītā* in my book *Indian Philosophy*: Allen and Unwin.

Ṛṣis of the *Upaniṣads*, the prophets of Israel, and the founders of religions have heard God's voice and felt His presence. God is supremely impartial to His devotees, whatever form of address and approach they may adopt. "Whoever comes to Me through whatsoever form, I reach him," says the Lord in the *Gītā*.

However, distinctions are made, on the basis of the threefold activity of human consciousness, into the *Jnāna-mārga* or the path of knowledge and illumination, *Bhakti-mārga* or the path of faith and devotion, and *Karmamārga* or the path of work and service. Thought, feeling, and will are not isolated faculties, but only distinguishable aspects of experience. Each of them makes its own contribution to the whole, and is penetrated by the others. The three—right knowledge, right desire, and right action—go together. The first reveals to us the truth, the second instils a love for it, and the third moulds life. Mere knowledge, unvivified by the warmth of feeling, leads to icy coldness of heart; mere emotion, unlit by knowledge, is hysteria; mere action, unguided by wisdom and uninspired by love, is meaningless ritual or feverish unrest. All the three enter into the integral experience of a perfect life. Yet as the emphasis on the three sides is changing in different men, they approach the problem of life from different sides.

The *Gītā* says: "There is no purifier like unto *Jnāna*, or wisdom." This *Jnāna* is not dialectical learning, which is dismissed as mere "words" in the famous dialogue in the *Upaniṣads* between Narada, the representative of encyclopaedic learning, and Sanatkumara, the true knower of the Self. Man in his essential nature is freedom of spirit and wisdom. Our limitations shut us away from the reality of ourselves and subject us to error. The real question for logic is not, how or why the individual knows, but how or why he fails to know. Error is due to our limitations. Intellectual growth consists in breaking down these limitations when we directly experience reality. This kind of *Jnāna*, which is independent of symbols and senses, is life living itself in the the very heart of reality. Conceptual construction and logical learning may be useful in leading us to the true wisdom. The *Gītā* insists on an intuitive insight, accompanied by rational knowledge—*jnānām vijnāna sahitam*. Without this logical support, intuition may turn out to be mere emotional subjectivity. The author of the *Gītā* by his saving clause, suggests that the direct consciousness of reality has universality about it. We can attain this experience of reality by a prayerful attitude. If we kill our intellectual conceit and acquire a receptive frame of mind, we shall lay ourselves open to the breeze from heaven. The Yoga discipline is intended to train the mind to hear the mighty voice of the silence within. We then feel our identity with the universal self, the Atman in us.

The cognitive pursuit of God is rather slow and painful. "The Father and Maker of this whole it is hard to find, and when one has found Him, to declare Him to all is impossible."[8] Our life is so short and the search is so slow. We cannot afford to wait. We are in a hurry to see. We wish to accept some faith which will sustain us in life and help us to go about, free from doubt, acting and achieving. The impatience of the people to reach God is the opportunity for the quack who promises speedy salvation to those who believe in him. Superstition and magic become the daily bread of common people. In the Brahmanical system, reason does not completely abdicate. The sense of truth controls the life of the people. The highest truths of philosophy are dressed up in fables and stories intelligible to the ordinary understanding, that "all may safely cross beyond the difficult and dangerous places of life, that all may see the face of happiness, that all may attain to right knowledge, and all may rejoice everywhere."[9] The stories of the *Purānas* enable the weak of mind to appreciate the highest good, and help the building up of the inner spirit.

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[8] Plato *Timoeus*, 29 c

Accepting all the forms of worship that prevailed in the country, the Hindu thinkers arranged them in a scale leading to the highest form of divine worship, which is the practice of the presence of God. A verse in the *Śiva Purāna* reads: "The highest state is the natural realisation of God's presence, the second in rank is meditation and contemplation, the third is the worship of symbols which are reminders of the Supreme, and the fourth is performance of ritual and pilgrimages to sacred places."[10] Idol-worship is unknown in the Rigveda. It obviously came into vogue later. It has always been recognized to be relative to an imperfect stage of development. Man is anthropomorphic, and is inclined to conceive God in vivid and pictorial form. He cannot express his mental attitude except through symbolism and art. However inadequate the symbols may be as expressions of the real, they are tolerated so long as they help the human spirit in its effort after the Divine. The symbol need not be superseded so long as it suggests the right standpoint. There is a beautiful defence of image-worship, quoted from Maximus of Tyre, in Prof. Gilbert Murray's *Four Stages of Greek Religion*, which excellently sums up the Hindu's attitude to symbolic worship: "God Himself, the father and fashioner of all that is, older than the sun or the sky, greater than time and eternity, and all the flow of being, is unnameable by any law-giver, unutterable by any voice, not to be seen by any eye. But we, being unable to apprehend His essence, use the help of sounds and names, and pictures, of beaten gold and ivory and silver, of plants and rivers, mountain-peaks and torrents, yearning for the knowledge of Him, and in our weakness naming all that is beautiful in this world after His nature—just as happens to earthly lovers. To them the most beautiful sight will be the actual lineaments of the beloved, but for remembrance' sake they will be happy in the sight of a lyre, a little spear, a chair perhaps, or a running ground, or anything in the world that wakens the memory of the beloved. Why should I further examine and pass judgment about Images? Let men know what is divine, let them know; that is all. If a Greek is stirred to the remembrance of God by the art of Phidias, an Egyptian by paying worship to animals, another man by a river, another by fire—I have no anger for their divergences; only let them know, let them love, let them remember."[11] These words so true, so tender and so tolerant, jar on our ears, accustomed to hear dull dogmatics and fanatic falsehoods. If the symbolic function of the idol is overlooked, and if the metaphor is taken literally, the true God whom we are seeking to realise appears as He is not. The thinking Hindu does not forget the instrumental character of idol worship. The Yogis see God in Self and not in the images.[12]

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[9] "*Sarvastaratu durgāni, sarvo bhadrāni pasyatu | sarvastad buddhimapnotu sarvassarvatra nandatu.*" *Bhagavata Purana. cf.* Spinoza's saying that "the highest good is common to all and all may equally enjoy it."

[10] *Uttamasahajāvasthā, dvitiya dhyānādhāraṇā | tritiya pratimāpujā, homayātrā chaturdhikā.*

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[11] Pp. 98-99

Realising as it does the force of the lower forms of worship, on the principle of milk for babes and meat for men, Hinduism has developed a religious atmosphere permeated by the highest philosophic wisdom as well as symbolic worship, round which much glorious art has gathered. It has room for all men of all grades of cultural equipment and religious instinct. In a Hindu home the most purified modes of worship retain some external form for the sake of the young who are growing up under the same roof. It is idle to stifle the impulses of the child by breaking its playthings, simply because we are grown up and do not find any need for them.

The emotionally-toned men look upon God as the perfect Beauty or Love, and wish to be lost in the enjoyment of His presence. Krishna is the typical God of beauty and love, and his appeal to men and especially to women, dominated by emotion and sentiment, is great. A touching folk-song says: "His flute doth call and I must go: and though the way be through the forest thick with thorns, I must go." When the irresistible call comes, none with a heart can fail to respond. For the aesthetic temperament, emotional intensity seems to give ultimate satisfacton. Beauty is its own excuse for being. The devotee clings to the feet of the Lord and refuses to leave them for anything on earth. Tukaram says: "I have grasped thy feet, I will not let them go. . . . I will not let thee go, not if thou givest me all else." Chaitanya says: "I crave not for money, nor for men, nor for beautiful women, nor for poetic genius. O Lord of the world, I only crave that in every birth of mine, *bhakti* may grow in me towards thee, O Lord." The Hindu thinkers combat the tendency to exalt religious devotion over love of truth and practice of goodness. They know full well that emotions are not isolated functions. By themselves they are morally colourless. The value of an emotion depends on the source from which it springs, whether it is an exalted spiritual devotion or a degrading sensual indulgence. The *bhakti* doctrine does not say that all feeling is sacred. Only the feeling of contemplative humility which accompanies the consciousness of absolute dependence on God is the true religious feeling or *bhakti*. Such a feeling expressive of knowledge issues in a life devoted to the service of man. Worship, music and art develop the religion of feeling.

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[12] *Sivamatmani pasyanti pratimasu na yoginah.*

The practically-minded man tries to realise his divine destiny by the performance of duty, *karma*, and social service, *yajna*. Freedom is the nature of man; bondage is due to the barriers that shut us from ourselves. Our slavery is complete when we begin to hug it. If we break our selfishness, which walls us off from the world, and identify ourselves with the larger ends, we can gradually develop the love that casteth out fear, disarms all hatred, and breaks all springs of bitterness. Mere mechanical morality is not likely to lead us to the end. It has to be fed by a vital union with God. Then shall we realise that in every man

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there is a ray of the eternal light emanating from the Central Sun. When we love man, we are conscious of our unity with him in the central spirit and we give effect to this consciousness in our lives. This takes us to the next topic of the ethical character of the Hindu religion.

Ethical Character

The ethical discipline, which is an application of the doctrine to life; is intended to enable man to realise his potentialities, that he might stand secure in his own soul, free from the hold of the past and fearless of the chances of the future. Ethical endeavour consists in an attempt to live on earth, every moment of our life, in the sweet spirit of adoration, in the glad consciousness of an eternal relationship with God. The ideal man lives always in the light of heaven, and his life embodies the great virtues of truth, purity, love and renunciation. Moral progress is judged not by man's power over the forces of nature, but by his control over the passions of the heart. To speak the truth under a shower of bullets, to refrain from reprisals even when you are on the Cross, to respect man and animal, to give all we have, to toil for others, and turn the other cheek, are the principal duties of man. Our modern practical reformers may dismiss them all as too high and unfit for becoming human nature's daily food, admirable ideals fit to console the feeble mind of India or the fishermen of Galilee, but impossible of realisation. Aware of the distance separating actual human nature from this ideal perfection, the Hindu thinkers devised a system of culture and discipline to train the individual for his destiny. The complex of institutions and influences which shape the moral feeling and character of the people is called the *dharma*, which is a fundamental feature of the Hindu religion. Hinduism does not believe in enforcing creeds, but calls upon all Hindus to conform to the discipline. It is a culture more than a creed. If ye do the will or the *dharma*, ye shall know of the doctrine or the truth. The *dharma* helps the smouldering fire which is in every individual to burst into flame.

The *dharma* is a code of conduct supported by the general conscience of the people. It is not subjective in the sense that the conscience of the individual imposes it, nor external in the sense that the law enforces it. It is the system of conduct which the general opinion or the spirit of the people supports, what the Germans call *Sittlichkeit*. Fichte defines the latter as "those principles of conduct which regulate people in their relations to each other, and have become a matter of habit and second nature at the stage of culture reached, and of which therefore we are not explicitly conscious." The *dharma* does not force men into virtue, but trains them for it. It is not a fixed code of mechanical rules, but a living spirit which grows and moves in response to the development of the society. Even the State in India was a servant of the *dharma*. It was not above morality. Its function was not to alter or annul *dharma*, but only to administer it. The functions of the State never intruded into the life of the people. The *dharma* or the social life has continued the same in principle for over 4,000 years in spite of divergent religious creeds, dynastic wars, and political feuds. The living continuity of Indian life is to be seen not in her political history, but in her cultural and social life. Political obsession has captured India since the battle of Plassey.

Today politics have absorbed life. The State is invading society, and the India of "no nations", as Rabindranath puts it, is struggling to become a "nation" in the Western sense of the term, with all its defects and merits.

The *dharma* has two sides, which are interdependent, the individual and the social. The conscience of the individual requires a guide and he has to be taught the way to realise his purpose and live according to spirit and not sense. The interests of society require equal attention. *Dharma* is that which holds together all living beings in a harmonious order.[13] Virtue is conduct contributing to social welfare, and vice is its opposite. It is frequently insisted that the highest virtue consists in doing to others as we would be done by. Both the individual and the social virtues are included in what are called *nitya karmas*, or obligatory duties, which are cleanliness or *śaucam*, good manners or *āchāram*, social service or *panchamahyajnas*, and prayer and worship or *sandhyāvandanam*. The *varnāśrama dharma*, which deals with the classes of society and the stages of the individual life, develops the details.

The end of the individual is not so much the securing of happiness here on earth as the realisation of an ideal, the accomplishment of a mission. This has to be achieved through the education of the individual which involves restraint and suffering. Four stages are distinguished in each man's life. In the first stage of *Brahmacharya*, the obligations of temperance, sobriety, chastity, social service are firmly established in the minds of the young. All have to pass through this discipline, irrespective of class or rank, wealth or poverty. In the second stage of a *gṛhastha* or householder, the individual undertakes the obligations of family life. He becomes a member of a social body and accepts its rights and obligations, some of the sweetest of the habits of human nature are developed through the ties that bind us to our fellow-men. Self-support, thrift, and hospitality are enjoined in this stage. The householder is respected most, since he supports the three other stages. Caste rules are relevant only to this stage. In the third stage of *vānaprastha* the individual is required to check his attachment to worldly possessions, suppress all the conceits bred in him through the accidents of the second stage, such as pride of birth or property, individual genius or good luck, and cultivate a spirit of renunciation. When he is thoroughly disciplined for the higher life he becomes a *sannyāsin*, a disinterested servant of humanity who finds his peace in the strength of spirit. A state of perfect harmony with the Eternal is reached, and the education of the human spirit terminates.

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[13] *Dharanad dharma nityāhu, dharmena vidhrutah prajāh*

These *sannyāsins* do not cut themselves off from the world and let it go to rack and ruin. The greatest of their class, Buddha and Śankara, Rāmānuja and Rāmānanda, and scores of others, have entered into the life-blood of the nation and laid the foundations of its religion. Their names are today a part of the national heritage

The caste rules relate to the social functions of individuals. Man's nature can be developed only by a concentration of his personality at a particular point in the social order. Since human beings show one or other of the three aspects of mental life in a greater degree, the *dvijas* or the twice-born are distinguished into the three classes of men of thought, men of feeling, and men of action. Those in whom no one quality is particularly developed are the Śudras.

The four castes correspond to the intellectual, militant, industrial, and unskilled workers, who are all members of one organic whole. So early as the period of the Rigveda was the organic nature of society brought out by the metaphor of head, arms, trunk, and legs, answering to the four classes which are bound by ties of common fellowship. Each class has its appropriate place, rights, and duties in the whole. Since all work is noble, caste pride and exclusiveness are not encouraged. Caste implies responsibilities and not rights. No one is free from any quality, though different qualities predominate in different men. The fulfilment of our functions is not merely a contribution to the whole but also a mode of self-expression. The unique nature of each individual realises itself in his work, which in a special sense is his own work, *svadharma*.[14]

The ideal of the Hindu *dharma* is to make all men Brahmins, all people prophets. Then they gain the inward liberty and the joy of spiritual communion, and spontaneously refrain from resisting evil by force, returning violence for violence, and possess the patience and the love to bear it if any one beats them, and yield to his wishes if any one would deprive them of anything. They are filled with the spirit of peaceful joy or *śanti*, which means the extinction of all hate. True Brahminhood represents the highest of which human nature is capable. The social fabric is organised on the basis of spiritual perfection. Man has no wings to soar to the heights; he has therefore to be content with scaling them through effort and pain, step by step. The Hindu social organisation embodies this graduated scheme. I may illustrate this point by the two examples of *qhimsā* or non-violence and cow-protection. "Thou shalt not slay," either men or animals. It is the highest law, the only law worthy of man. Every Brahmin is asked to respect it, yet the system provides for a class of warriors whose profession it is to kill and get killed. The organisers felt that the spirit of retaliation, "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth", was firmly rooted in human nature. It cannot be suddenly displaced. When submission to evil is wrong, when resisting it by love is impossible, then resistance by violence is allowed, and the warrior classes are told that it is their duty to resist aggression by force. It is, however, a concession to human nature, and the Kshatriya is told that the law of love which the Brahmin practises is higher than the law of brute force which he himself employs. The Kshatriya represents a lower stage of development, since he looks upon man as a lump of flesh and not a spark of God. He is called upon to fight in a spirit of brotherliness, without hate and out of a sense of duty, and not in a vindictive mood—that he who has made me suffer must suffer too. If the Kshatriya acts in this spirit of humanity, he will rise in spiritual status and rely less on brute force, until at last he becomes a Brahmin incapable of injuring any living thing on earth. Though violent resistance is allowed, the end is to transcend it. We have to sail along the current of nature in order to pass beyond it.

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[14] I have not here referred to the bearing of the caste system on village government and trade guilds, or to the present corrupted state of the institution.

The law against killing applies to the animal world also. Its logical implication is that we should abstain from animal food. The animal creation is also from God, and so has to be treated with kindness. The cow is the symbol of the animal world. The daily prayer of the regenerate Hindus asks for the protection of the cow and the Brahmin, symbols of the animal and the human worlds, nourishers of our bodies and souls, respectively. Gandhi writes: "Why the cow was selected for apotheosis is obvious to me. The cow was in India man's best companion. She was the giver of plenty. The cow is a poem of pity . . . the mother to millions of Indian mankind. Protection of the cow means protection of the whole dumb creation of God."[15] But there were people in India who showed no pity or mercy for the animal world. They had to be trained out of their habits. The ideal of the Brahmin who abstains from all animal food, who hurts no being either for sport or food, has been ennobling in its influence. The warriors and the traders are chiefly vegetarians. Even the Śudras on sacred days abstain from animal food. Thus there is a steady growth towards vegetarianism. Those who have absolutely no scruples about the treatment of animals are the *Panchamas*, on whom the influence of Hinduism has not been perceptible.

The charge that Hinduism has done nothing to unchain the moral and spiritual forces of the lower classes displays a colossal ignorance of the work of Hinduism in India. Today, after so many centuries of Buddhism and Christianity, when a civilized race comes into contact with a backward one, it does not care to understand the mentality of the latter, but practises cruel methods of conquest and subjection, so that the backward races, if they are left eyes to weep with, spend laborious days and sleepless nights cursing God, because He had allowed these civilizers to get into their lands. The Aryans of India accepted the natives into their fold and helped them to get rid of their habits of dirt and drunkenness, lead clean lives and worship the one living God. When the original inhabitants were found worshipping serpents, the Aryans told them that there was a greater than the serpent-god, the Nāgeśwara, the Lord of Serpents, or Krishna who dances on the head of the serpent Kaliya. They did not expose themselves to the avenging power of facts by hurriedly forcing up society to a higher plane of conduct which could not be reached without an inward call. The work of gradual civilizing by means of caste continued till the advent of the Mohammedans. In a large country like India, with no easy means of communication, the work achieved is really great. Mr. James Kennedy writes: "The absorption and assimilation of these aboriginal or foreign masses within the Hindu fold was the task of new Hinduism, a task mainly accomplished between the seventh and eleventh centuries A. D.; and it was so thoroughly done that we now find throughout northern India a Hindu population fairly homogeneous in blood, culture, and religion, and sufficiently marked from the degraded tribes that still haunt the outskirts of civilization."[16] Outsiders have been steadily flowing into the Hindu fold, and the religion has been able to absorb and inspire heterogeneous peoples with elements of the higher life. But for this civilizing work India would have had, instead of fifty million untouchables, five times that number. This work has ceased to be effective since the loss of political freedom by the Hindus. It was then that Hindu society became fixed up in a conservatism and left outside its pale a considerable part of the population of India, which has been the field for exploitation by the non-Hindu religions.

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[15] *Young India*, 6 October 1921.

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[16] *Imperial Gazetteer*, Vol. II, Chap. VIII.

Tradition

All Hindus are expected to accept the *Vedas* as their highest religious authority. They embody the principles of life and of the universe. The vital parts of the *Vedas* are the *Upaniṣads*, products of a perfectly spontaneous spiritual movement which implicitly superseded the cruder aspects of the *Vedas*. The subsequent history of the Hindu faith has been a steady building on the foundations truly laid in the *Upaniṣads*. Though religious thought has traversed many revolutions and made great conquests, the central ideas have continued the same for nearly fifty centuries. Whenever dogmatic developments succeeded in imprisoning the living faith in rigid creeds, true prophets of the spirit arose and summoned the people to a spiritual revival. When the movement of the *Upaniṣads* became lost in dogmatic controversies, and the fever of dialectical disputation lulled the spirit of religion, Buddha insisted on the simplicity of truth and the majesty of the moral law. Probably in the same period, though in another part of the country, when canonical culture and useless learning made religion inhuman scholasticism, and filled with ridiculous pride those learned in this difficult trifling, the author of the *Gītā* opened the gates of heaven to all those who are pure in heart. Sankara's reformation of the Indian religion is not yet a spent force. Ramanuja and Madhwa, Kabir and Nanak, have left permanent marks on the Hindu faith. It is clear that Hinduism is a process, not a result: a growing tradition, not a fixed revelation. It never shut off by force wisdom from anywhere, for there are no distinctions of mine and thine in the Kingdom of Spirit.

The Hindu Dharma

FROM the time the history of the Aryans in India commenced up till today, it has been the privilege or the misfortune of India to be faced with serious racial and religious crises. In a special sense, India has been a small edition of the world. It is a laboratory where experiments of racial and religious syntheses relevant to the problems of the world are undertaken and worked out. If it be true that every people has its own distinctive note and brings out one particular aspect of the divine manifestation, India seems to have been selected, in the economy of things, for the purpose of offering solutions for racial and religious conflicts.

In the long history of the Hindu religion with all its cross currents and backwaters, with the windings of the stream and the barren expanses of sand, it is possible to discern a general tendency, a spiritual direction which has continued the same in spite of varying expressions. The central principles of the ancient Hindu *dharma* are not dead shells, but living powers full of strength and suggestiveness. Even if it be not so, it is not altogether without interest to understand the principles of the Hindu faith which has more than two hundred million followers today.

The term "*dharma*" is one of complex significance. It stands for all those ideals and purposes, influences and institutions that shape the character of man both as an individual and as a member of society. It is the law of right living, the observance of which secures the double object of happiness on earth and salvation.[1] It is ethics and religion combined. The life of a Hindu is regulated in a very detailed manner by the laws of *dharma*. His fasts and feasts, his social and family ties, his personal habits and tastes are all conditioned by it.

Moksha or spiritual freedom is the aim of all human life. It is the destiny of man to reach the summits of spirit and attain immortality. We are the children of God, *Amṛtasya putraḥ*. The eternal dream of the human heart, the aspiration of the soul to come to its own, is the basis of the Hindu *dharma*. It assumes that the fundamental reality is the soul of man. All the desires of the heart, all discussions of logic presuppose the Ātman. It is something unprovable by reason, though no proof is possible without it. Nor is it a mere matter of faith, since it is the faith which underlies all reason. If the self of man is open to doubt, then nothing on earth is free from it. If anything can be, then the soul *is*. It is the ultimate truth which is above all change, the unseen reality which is the basis of all life and logic. It is the mystery which silently affirms itself. What our minds think is not of much importance beside the truth that we are. The fears of man are due to the imperfections which shut him from his destiny, the darkness which hides the light within. If we take refuge in the Self, the only fixed point of our being, we shall know that we are not alone in the apparently endless road of life or *samsāra* and that we can overcome the world and defy death. "Greater is he that is within you than he that is in the world."[2]

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[1] *Abhyudaya* and *Niḥśreyasa*.

While the spiritual perfection of man is the aim of all endeavour, the Hindu *dharma* does not insist on any religious belief or form of worship. The utmost latitude is allowed in the matter of addressing and approaching the Supreme. The Hindu thinkers were good students of philosophy and sociology and never felt called upon to enforce religious belief. Misunderstandings and antagonisms in religious matters arise, when we put forward excessive claims on behalf of our own views of God. Besides, religion implies freedom and it is the greatest injury that we can inflict on man to compel him to accept what he cannot understand. Again, it is difficult to classify the ways of man to God. The heart of man has written, in its blood, its pathway to God. A Sanskrit verse says: "As the birds float in the air and the fish swim in the sea leaving no traces behind, even so are the paths traversed by the spiritual." Christ spoke of the mystery of the divine life revealing itself in the finite soul. "The wind bloweth where it listeth; thou hearest the sound thereof, and canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the spirit." God reveals himself now by a flash of lightning, now by a tremor in the soul. To a Hindu who has understood the spirit of his religion all faiths are sacred.

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[2] I. John, V. 21.

In Rabindranath's school at Bolpur, where the one Invisible God is worshipped, abuse of others' faiths is disallowed. Gandhi is most tolerant in his religious views. Regarding the attitude of the Brahmin thinkers to other religions, Wilson writes: "The Brahmins who compiled a code of Hindu law, by command of Warren Hastings, preface their performance by affirming the equal merit of every form of religious worship. Contrarieties of belief, and diversities of religion, they say, are in fact part of the scheme of Providence; for as a painter gives beauty to a picture by a variety of colours, or as a gardener embellishes his garden with flowers of every hue, so God appointed to every tribe its own religion that man might glorify him in diverse modes, all having the same end and being equally acceptable in his sight.'[3]

This does not, however, mean that the Hindu thinkers have no right ideas of God and consider all beliefs to be equally true. They have a sure perception of the highest truth, though they do not insist on a universal acceptance of it. They believe that if the mind is enlightened, the truth will be spontaneously perceived. Every religion is an expression of the mental and social evolution of the people who adopt it. It is therefore mischievous to attempt any sudden supplanting of existing beliefs by new ones. The cruder conceptions will give way before the rising rational reflection and the true reformer tries to improve the mental and moral nature of men. Truth is not so much the result of theological faith as the experience of a deeper moral life. So the Hindu thinkers pay more attention to the discipline than to the doctrine.

H. H. Wilson: *Essays and Lectures*, Vol. II, p. 8.

The religion of the Hindus is not so much a theology as a scheme of life. Whether one is an orthodox Hindu or not depends, not on whether one believes this or that view of God, but on whether one accepts or rejects the *dharma*.[4]

The highest life enjoined by the *dharma* is what follows naturally from vital faith in the reality of God. If the indwelling of God in man is the highest truth, conduct which translates it into practice is ideal conduct. The several virtues are forms of the truth, *satyakaras*.[5] Truth, beauty, and goodness are a part of the life stuff of the ideal man. He will be an embodiment of the virtues of self-denial, humility, fraternal love and purity. By the mastery of soul over sense, clouds of hate and mists of passion dissolve and he will be filled with *śānti* or serenity and will remain absolutely calm in moments of great peril, personal loss or public calamity. With tranquillity of soul, a steady pulse and a clear eye he will do the right thing at the right moment. He does not belong to this country or that, but is, in a true sense, the citizen of the world. The quality of *sattva* with its ideals of joy and love predominates over that of *rajas* with its craving for power and pride, and over that of *tamas* with its dulness and inertia. For the perfect men the *dharma* is an inspiration from within; for others it is an external command, what custom and public opinion demand.

The ideal which requires us to refrain from anger and covetousness, to be pure and loving in thought, word and deed, is much too high for those passing through the storm and stress of a life of sin and suffering. It seems to demand of life what it possibly cannot give. It kills all the constituent conditions of life. If renunciation of all were necessary for salvation, many may not care to be saved. The world is so organised that those who practise the divine rule do not have much chance of success or survival. We are familiar with the way in which the Sermon on the Mount is dismissed as impossible idealism. We cannot be turning our cheeks to the smiters to receive blows, when it is so tempting to give blows on both the cheeks. It may be divine to rejoice in suffering, but the flesh is weak for all that. Christendom consoles itself in the belief that even Jesus nodded once or twice. "O, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Those who pride themselves on their practical spirit reduce the ideals to the level of ordinary human nature, subject to the temptations of power and profit, the flesh and the devil. The modern worldly reformer says: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time: 'Thou shalt not kill,' but I say unto you, 'Thou shalt not kill except animals for food, birds for sport and men in battle.' It hath been said: 'Thou shalt not covet.' But I say unto you: 'Thou shalt not covet except on a large scale as in trade and imperialism.' Again, ye have heard it said by them of old time: 'Thou shalt not hate,' but I say unto you: 'Thou shalt not hate except the backward races, the enemy nations and the weak of the world.'" Alarmed at the sacrifices exacted by a religious life which tells us that happiness does not depend on power or wealth, but on love and peace, our advanced reformers make so many reservations to the divine law that they completely destroy the force of the latter and justify our modern practice that violence, abundance of possessions and armaments are the final end of man's life. They conveniently forget the story of the man who planned to build great store-houses to provide an abundance for many years, but was cheated of his chance by the blow of death which came overnight.

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[4] See *Manu*, II, 11.

[5] See *Mahābhārata*, Anuśāsana Parva, 162 and Śānti Parva, 53.

The Hindu thinkers are conscious of the great gulf that separates the actual nature of man, which is bad, from the ideal, which seems to be well-nigh impossible. The consciousness of the great distance between the actual and the ideal does not tempt them to distort the ideal itself. It would be a blasphemy against the spirit in us that shall not be forgiven. They therefore attempt to develop the infinitely precious ideal from out of the apparently refractory stuff of life. The nature of man and his habits of judgment change rather slowly. We must have patience in the striving after perfection. The Law of *Karma* tells us that millions of lives are consumed before one perfect life is produced. For thought to reach the highest plane we must plan, toil and agonize a lot. For our heart to pulse with joy, countless hearts must be crushed by suffering. Many strivings and sacrifices are needed to generate a holy character. Most men climb up the ladder to the spiritual heights only rung by rung. Few can fly from the bottom to the top at one bound. The *varṇāśrama dharma* or the discipline of the classes and stages of life is the Hindu's device for the gradual improvement of human nature. It is intended to make all the Lord's people prophets. Its principles are those of a kingdom of spirit, not a civil commonwealth—of a universal institution, not a national organisation. If morality is that which conscience imposes, and law that which the State commands, *dharma* is neither the one nor the other. It is the tradition sustained by the convictions of countless generations of men, which help to build the soul of truth in us. It corresponds to the *Sittlichkeit* of the Germans and is independent of both the individual conscience and the laws of the State. That is why dynastic feuds and imperialist aggressions have not touched the life of India which has continued the same for nearly fifty centuries. Successive storms of conquest have passed over the changeless millions as the wind over reeds.

Moksha or liberation is the ideal towards which humanity has to move. All life is set to the music of this ideal. All men are equal in that they are born of God. They are equal since they are to rise to the same divine destiny. But men differ with regard to their actual equipment for the ideal. They have varying amounts of darkness and evil to eliminate, and have to put forth varying efforts to illumine their life with light and love. The education of the individual spirit is arranged through the scheme of *asramas* or stages of life and *varnas* or classes of men. It takes into account the different sides of human nature. The life of man is rooted in *kāma* or desire. Man is a bundle of desires. Manu says: "It is not good that the soul should be enslaved by desire, yet nowhere is to be found desirelessness (*akāmatā*)."[6] Since our activities are impelled by our desires, the right regulation of our desires is also a part of *dharma*. So *kāma* or enjoyment is recognised as a valid pursuit. It is not mere satisfaction of animal impulses, but is the expression of the freedom of the self. This is not possible, until we escape from the tyranny of the senses. The life of man is not a mere succession of sensations, but is the manifestation of an eternal idea developing itself through temporary forms. The desires of men are directed into the channels of family life and public duty. The emotional or artistic life of man is also a part of life's integral good. But art cannot flourish in an atmosphere of asceticism. We must have *artha* or wealth. The economic needs of the community should be satisfied, if the creative impulses of men are to be liberated for the higher cultural life. Rules are laid down regarding the interests of the community in the matter of the wealth earned by individual members. The liberty of each is restricted by the needs of all. Self-denial is the only way to gain wealth and enjoyment. *Dharma* or duty controls the pursuit of both pleasure and profit (*kāma* and *artha*). Those in whom *dharma* predominates are of *sāttvik* nature, while the seekers of wealth are of *rājasik* nature and the seekers of mere pleasure are of *tamasik* nature.[7] The individual who observes the laws of *dharma* automatically attains *moksha*, and so is it said that *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *moksha* form the ends of life.

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[6] II, 23.

Whatever may be the truth about the origin of life and the universe, the supremacy of the moral end is admitted by all. In Hindu thought, man is said to come into being for a divine purpose. The unextinguished passions of our vanished lives bring about our birth on earth. It is through suffering that our weakness can be converted into strength, our ignorance into illumination. The evil of existence is expiated only by the suffering and self-restraint of life. The word "*āśrama*" comes from a root which means "to suffer". Without suffering, there is no progress; without death, no resurrection. Our life from beginning to end is a kind of death which means a larger life. The more we die to ourselves, the more do we live to God. Living and dying are inextricably blended and the perfect life is the crown of a complete death. Four stages are distinguished in the life of every Hindu, of which the first two are those of *Brahmachārī* or student, and *Gṛhastha* or house-holder. The last two stages deal with the retirement from life, in which the individual becomes a servant of God and of humanity.[8]

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[7] *Manu* XII, 38.

The first period opens with the sacramental symbol of initiation into a spiritual life. It is intended to build up the psycho-physical constitution of man. The building of the body and the training of the mind are the principal aims of this stage. The student is taught the habits of cleanliness, chastity, good manners and godliness.[9] Social sympathies are cultivated by insistence on poverty for all students whether they are sons of princes or of peasants. Every student is required to beg for his food and this training in poverty impresses on the mind of the student that wealth is not an essential condition of a good life. The students are not allowed to become laws unto themselves; nor are they delivered into the hands of an ignorant and blind fanaticism. They are not allowed to build altars and idols in their own imagination or fall a prey to superstitions and creeds. Loyalty to truth and respect for tradition are insisted on. The kind of education that is to be given depends on the needs and capacities of the boys. The task was not so complex as it is today, since the future vocations of boys were roughly settled. In the programme of education, secular as well as religious, no distinction is made between boys and girls. Only co-education was not encouraged.

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[8] *Manu* VI, 87.

[9] *Manu* II, 69.

When the stage of apprenticeship is over, the student becomes responsible for a family: "The man is not man alone, but his wife and children also."[10] He becomes the bread-winner of the family and thus the mainstay of the community. Family life and social duty help towards the ultimate goal and presuppose self-restraint. Every man is expected to do his work for the world. He should not, out of mere selfish pleasure, abstain from social service.[11] We are pledged to one another and should live for one another, the individual for the family, the family for the community, the community for the nation and the nation for the world. The caste system, valid in the second stage of the householder, assumes the unity and the interdependence of humanity. It takes into account the needs of the society as well as the interests of the individual. It sustains personality in that it helps the individual to transcend himself by giving his devotion to something beyond himself. By focussing his energies at a particular point in the environment, it tries to actualise his potentialities. It is an illustration of Hegel's harmony of opposites, a point of view which reconciles the apparently conflicting claims of the individual and of society. Not the good of the self as a thing apart, or the good of society by itself, but a higher good, to promote which constant self-renewal and social service are the means, is the governing principle of the caste system. Taking into account the variety of human nature, it lays down ways and means by which each man can attain full self-expression. It works up to the ideal of equality by recognising the actual differences. It is an attempt to co-operate with the forces of nature and not flout them. Those who criticise the institution from the platform of modern knowledge do not remember that in no other country were peoples belonging to stocks of very unequal value thrown together. The pre-*Vedic* peoples with whom the Aryans had to mingle were of a lower grade of civilization and culture. They were constituted into the fourth estate of the unregenerate, the once-born, the *ekajāta*, in whom no quality of intellect, emotion, or will is particularly developed. The twice-born of the regenerated are divided into three classes according as their intellect, emotion or will is more dominant than the others. Those who are strongly endowed with the powers of thought and reflection are the Brahmins; those gifted with heroism and love are the Kshatriyas; those strongly inclined towards the practical business of life are the Vaisyas. The four classes correspond to the intellectual, the militant, the industrial and the unskilled workers. All of them serve God's creation by their own capacities, the Brahmins by their spirituality, the Kshatriyas by their heroism, the Vaisyas by their skill and the Sudras by their service.[12] All of them place the common good above that of their party or class. Claims of egoism and ambition are subordinated to those of conscience and justice, the enduring values that are confided to our keeping. When the different classes fulfil their respective functions, the society is considered to be just or in accordance with *dharma*.

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[10] *Manu* IX, 45.

[11] *The Bhagavadgītā* III, 16.

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[12] *Śukranīti* 1, 38-42.

The true interests of the unskilled workers were not neglected. The Vaisyas pursue trade and love wealth and comfort, though they are required to interpret them in terms of life and welfare. This caste is an association of men united by an economic nexus. Commercialism, however, was checked, since the members of this class were called upon to hold the goods of life in the bonds of love. The Kshatriyas were the defenders of society from external aggression and internal disorder. The military organisation of the state was entrusted to them. They were in the charge of the political arrangements. It was not the intention of the Hindu *dharma* to make the entire body of the people act as a general militia. Efficiency is everywhere gained through specialisation. Those whose business it is to make war and resist wrong by force must possess the proper aptitude for it and get the necessary training. The art of Government cannot be practised by all. It is increasingly felt that amateur politicians keen on satisfying their constituencies and with no other training than what could be got from the hurly-burly of popular elections are incapable of doing justice to the task of administration. One particular class was devoted to the military and the administrative purposes, and the people as a whole were not possessed by a passion for government, for domination and power. Today, the great wars are fought for the government of the world and for the possession of its markets and not for the moral elevation of the people or the pursuit of good. The political obsession is the cause of the drifting of the world in deep confusion to unseen issues. It may be said that when there is a professional ruling class, there is no guarantee that the rule will be unselfish. But the training to which they are subjected is a sufficient security for the right discharge of their functions. Besides, the rulers are not allowed to annul or alter *dharma*, but only to administer it. The changes in the *dharma* are introduced by the Brahmin thinkers, who possess no vested interests, but lead a life of spirit in compulsory poverty. They interpret the *dharma* in cases of doubt and difficulty.

The organisation of the society is essentially aristocratic in the best sense of the term, since only the philosophically minded men with detachment of view lay down the laws. The priests were the law-givers even among the Jews, the Iranians and the Celts. The qualifications of the true Brahmins, wisdom, self-control and disinterestedness, made selfish legislation difficult. The Brahmins engaged in the pursuit of knowledge and the beautifying of life were regarded as superior to the officers and administrators, and were not obliged to do what was congenial to the latter. They were freed from all material cares and from subordination to earthly authorities in spiritual matters.[13] The institution recognises that all good reforms start in the mind of one man and at first repel the world at large. Society cannot progress if all forward steps should first obtain the sanction of the majority. Absolute freedom for the creative thinkers is the first condition of culture and progress. Mr. Bertrand Russell, in a brilliant article in the *Century*, observes that "without freedom, the man who is ahead of his age is rendered impotent." The considered conviction of one wise man is more worthy than the opinions of a myriad fools, according to Manu.[14]

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[13] *Manu* IV, 11.

The moral codes are adapted to the different stages of the unfolding of the life of spirit. The trader hoards up life zealously for material ends; the warrior flings it away for order and organisation and resists evil by the employment of force. The Brahmin lives the life of *ahimsā* or non-violence with zeal and determination. His non-violence is not a sign of weakness or cowardice, but the natural expression of spiritual strength and divine love. He has passed through the stage of a warrior and has found it unworthy of a true believer in God. Centuries of hereditary training and the influence of environment have made the Hindu a mild passive meditative being, a worshipper of the ideal of the Brahmin *sannyāsin*. Even today he is willing to pay his tribute of profound admiration to an emaciated saint like Gandhi.

The existence of orders lower than the Brahmin, and the dedication of one class to the business of war, have misled many students of Hinduism into thinking that the Hindu *dharma* is not based on the principle of non-violence. The simple explanation that we have to pass through the lower stages in order to transcend them is forgotten. The higher we rise, the more austere should life be. The legend of St. Christopher, who under-took to carry the Christchild on his shoulders across a stream, is applicable to us all. The deeper he entered into the water, the heavier became the burden. By a slow conquest of the passions, by a rising knowledge of the spiritual basis of the world, all men who are born *Śudras* gradually rise in the scale till they become Brahmins. The load becomes heavier the higher we rise, and our strength will have to increase in proportion to the rise in the weight of the load. While the *Kshatriya*, in view of his limitations, may employ force, though without hatred and with a clean conscience, the Brahmin should refrain altogether from the use of force and the cherishing of hatred or ill-feeling for any.

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[14] XII, 113.

The relativity of the stages leading up to the absolute ideal may also be illustrated from another case. Modern evolution is confirming the Hindu theory of the continuity of the animal and the human worlds. The Hindu *dharma* inculcates respect for life and tenderness towards all forms of animal creation. "Thou shalt not kill" applies to the animals as well. It is also believed that animal diet clogs the finer sensibilities of human life. More than what it adds to the physical it takes away from the psychical. Jesus himself is quite clear that even animals are objects of sacredness, and that not a sparrow falls to the ground without the notice of God. Yet the peoples of India were accustomed to animal diet, and so regulations were laid down restricting the use of animal diet for the fourth class and prohibiting it as a rule for the other classes, with the result that the Hindus as a whole are tending to give it up more and more.

Caste has economic implications. Many of the modern castes are only occupational divisions. Every man is not fit for all things and does not feel that he can begin any trade as he pleases. Nor do individuals go about in search of work, but they serve society by filling the station in which they happen to be placed. Unlimited competition and selfish individualism are checked. A religious character is impressed on every kind of work and form of industry. The bricklayer and the carpenter, the blacksmith and the milkman believe that they glorify God by the right performance of their work. In these days of large-scale production and factory labour, we tend to forget that when a man is cut off from his family and made to work in a large factory, the work becomes joyless and mechanical. The caste on the other hand puts all men working in the same profession in their natural surroundings, instead of tearing them away from their homes and making them work for long hours on small wages. The fulness of communal life, with its living associations of beauty, love and social obligations, helps to make the worker happy. The members of his family who share in his work introduce sweetness and humanity into it. If women and children are to be made to work, it is better that they work in the atmosphere of a home where it is possible to embody their creative impulses in what they turn out. There is a finer stimulus to right action here than mere success in competition or the satisfaction of customers can supply. Those who practise the same craft develop corporate feeling and professional honour. The young acquire from the plastic influences of the environment the right kind of vocational training. They absorb unconsciously the tradition of the trade, and the economic pursuit happens to be the free self-expression of their soul. It is true that modern conditions are working against cottage industries and small-scale production. But it is not everywhere the case. Fine arts, decorative industries, even spinning and weaving, as supplementary interests of the agriculturists, may be confined to homes, and we can have small factories worked by electricity or oil engines. Caste as a trade guild is not yet out of date. While the suggestion of a definite programme of life at the very beginning is not undesirable, still stereotyping it without the least regard to the natural endowment and special aptitudes is likely to result in an enslavement of life which finds it difficult to adjust itself to the complex condition of the modern world.

Strictly speaking, the caste of a man is determined by the predominance of reason, emotion or will in him. These correspond roughly to the three *gunas* or qualities of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*.[15] Manu mentions three principles as governing the caste of a man, viz., *tapas* or individual effort, *śrutam* or the cultural environment and *yoni* or heredity. The first is a vague test and is not available for objective use. The second depends on the home influences, which in their turn depend on the third consideration of birth. The only practicable test is birth, and this view is in consonance with the principles of rebirth and *Karma* accepted by the Hindus.

Peoples with different racial heritages can live together in amity and fellowship only on the basis of caste. The formulators of the institution felt that, though birth was the only available test, spiritual character was the real basis of the divisions of society. Manu allows that, if an individual practises the ways of the good and leads a pure life, he overcomes the effects of heredity.[16] According to the *Mahābhārata*, the test of regeneracy is "not birth, not learning, but only conduct."[17] We have ignored all factors other than birth, with the result that the system has rigidly confined people for all time to particular compartments, enslaved successive generations of men and proved well-nigh fatal to the free growth of social polity. The natural plasticity and fluidity of life are not taken into account by the inflexible moulds and barriers of the system. We have reached a condition of society where the disorganisation of social life is so great that the principle of birth should be subordinated. Referring to a similar state of affairs, the *Mahābhārata* says: "There has been so much mixture in marriages that the test of *jāti* or birth is no good. The governing consideration should be *śīla* or conduct, and the first Manu has declared that there is no point in distinctions of caste, if character is not considered."[18]

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[15] See *Bhaviśya Purāṇa*, III, IV, 23.

Since the distinction of functions among the different classes is likely to generate pride and exclusiveness, in spite of the training during the student period, the general laws of the equal treatment of all are insisted on. The highest virtue consists in doing to others as we would be done by. *Viṣṇu Purāna* says: "Everywhere ye should perceive the equal; for the relations of equality or *samatva* is the worship of God."[19] There are duties which men of all castes are required to obey, such as non-injury to life, truth, integrity, cleanliness and self-control.[20] After all, the caste divisions are incidental to our imperfections and should not therefore constitute a source of pride. The one Eternal has no caste. The rules of caste are applicable only in the stage of the householder. Even here, they are not superior to the claims of humanity. What is necessary at the present day is acceptance of the aim of caste and the cultivation of a more truly social spirit. The blighting bigotries and the rigid restrictions on the amenities of life are inconsistent with humanity and fellowship and are therefore to be given up. Manu does not encourage them. "The ploughman, the friend of the family, the cowherd, the servant, the barber and the poor stranger offering his service—from the hands of such Śudras may food be taken."[21]

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[16] See also *Mahābhārata*-Vanaparva, *Ch.* 216.

[17] *Vrittam eva*, M. B. Vanaparva, Ch. 314.

[18] Vanaparva, Ch. 182. See *Manu* IV, 224 and 225.

[19] XVII.

The caste rules were not rigid until the advent of the Mohammedans into India. The social laws were fluid and elastic and the mutability of growth was not sacrificed to the strait waistcoat of a legal formula. We read in the *Purānas* stories of individuals and of families who changed from lower to higher castes. Manu admits the possibility of ascent and decent.[22] Rules for chạnge of caste by gradual purification are also mentioned.[23] The higher strata were accessible to merit from below. When Hindu India lost political freedom and the new rulers adopted a policy of proselytism, social initiative disappeared and law and custom became fetishes, with disastrous results

[20] *Manu* X, 63; VI, 91-92.

[21] *Manu* IV, 253.

[22] See X, 42; IX, 335.

[23] *Manu* X, 57-65.

for national solidarity. We have to recover the original spirit of the *dharma*, which was not limited to particular forms, but manifested itself in fresh ones, changing the old and developing the new. The exaggerated value given to caste in times of political insecurity is no more necessary. Caste has a future only if it is confined to social matters. In every society, people enter into marriage relations only with those who are near to them in habits of mind and action. Since a common cultural tradition is better developed among those who pursue the same vocation, marriages among members of the same profession become the order of the day. Even in ancient India, intermarriages among members of different castes were not forbidden, though they were not encouraged. *Anuloma* and *pratiloma* marriages are not usual, though they are not invalid according to Hindu law.[24] If such marriages are not common, it is because they tend to disturb the intimate, industrial, social and spiritual life of the community. Caste as a basis of intimate social relations does not interfere with the larger life of the nation. As the emperor Ashoka said to his Hindu minister: "Caste may be considered when it is a question of marriage or invitation, but not of *dharma*; for *dharma* is concerned with virtues, and have nothing to do with caste."[25]

To say that social service is unknown to the Hindus is to utter a bold untruth. Much capital is made out of the treatment of the untouchables. It is not remembered that a free India rendered them much greater service than what other free countries even in recent times have done for their backward classes. How have the superior nations civilized the Tasmanian and the Australian aborigines, certain Maori peoples and North American Indian tribes ? They generally refine them into extinction, and where that is not possible, they sink them into the slough of vice and crime worse than any normal expressions of savage life If the Kaffir has multiplied under the British protection and the Javanese under the Dutch, if the populations of Straits Settlements and British India have not vanished before their civilizers, it is because a good God has put them in a climate unfavourable to the civilizers. The tropics can never become the habitat of the Europeans. They can be held, but not peopled by them. But for the limits set by Nature, the history of the tropical regions would have been different. From the time the Aryans met the peoples of a lower grade of civilization, they devised ways and means by which the different portions of the population could develop in social, spiritual directions. The Aryans even accepted a non-Aryan representative of the "black" peoples--Krishna, and made him deliver the message of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Krishna's conduct scandalised society and provoked the *Vedic* gods, Indra and Brahma. Today the Aryan worshippers of these gods look upon Krishna as an *avatar* of God. Krishna, however, had great respect for the Aryan thinkers, and it is said that he washed the feet of the Brahmin guests at the Rajasuyayaga of king Yudhishthira. The Aryans took to the non-Aryan gods very kindly, improved them where possible, and subordinated them where necessary. The worshippers of Mahiṣa (buffalo-demon) were told that the Cosmic

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[24] See *Bombay Law Reporter*. Bai Gulab *vs.* Jivanlal Harilal. Vol. XXIV.

[25] *Indian Social Reformer*, 4 June, 1922.

Spirit was greater than the Mahiṣa. The worshippers of serpents were instructed that there was One greater than the serpents, the Lord of serpents, Nageśwara or Krishna, who danced over the head of Kaliya. The marks of the gradual civilizing of the lower classes are visible throughout the cultural history of India. Whenever there was a tendency to overlook the common humanity of men, a Buddha or a Śankara arose, emphasising the common lot of all—high and low. The extent of the country 2,000 miles long and 1,500 miles broad is not similar to that from Dan to Beersheeba. The means of communication that we have at the present day were not available till recently. If the work of civilizing the backward classes had not been undertaken and carried on with zeal and success by the ancient Indians, we would have had not merely fifty millions of these "depressed" classes, but a much larger number. When the outside invaders came into the country, the Hindu felt nervous, and, as a sheer act of self-preservation, stereotyped the existing divisions, and some tribes were left outside the pale of the caste order. Though Manu says that "there is no fifth class anywhere,"[26] the tribes who were not influenced by the *dharma* formed themselves into the fifth class. "He who has abandoned his duties, is cruel and pitiless, and oppresses others, and who is passionate and full of destructiveness is a *mleccha*."[27] No words are too strong for the deplorable condition of these people. To disregard the claims of man simply because he happens to be low or belongs to another race is against the religious spirit of Hinduism. Now that things are in a more settled condition, the Hindu leaders are reiterating the central truth that the least of all men has a soul and need not be considered past all power to save.

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[26] X, 4.

[27] *Sukranīti* I, 44.

The last two stages of *Vānaprastha* and *Sannyāsa*, which may be taken as one for our purposes, treat of those who have retired from the competitive struggle for life. The *Sannyāsin* represents the highest type of Indian manhood. From selfishness, the individual has progressed to self-annihilation through the extinction of all prejudice, hatred and ambition. He has passed through all institutions, and is now above them. His emotional life expresses itself in the love of God or *bhakti*, and not in animal lusts or personal likes. He perceives the oneness and wholeness of humanity, and his mind is freed from all superstition and unreason. His active energies are devoted to the service of humanity, knowing as he does that God is in all beings and *is* all of them.[28] He who has the vision of all in one, in whom the impersonal predominates over the personal, cannot sin.[29] He is the superman of the *Bhagavadgītā*, the awakened of Buddhism, the true Brahmin who glories in his poverty, rejoices in suffering, and is finely balanced in mind, with peace and joy at heart. He loves all men, birds and beasts, and resists not evil, but overcomes it by love. In him the soul of man is at its highest stretch. The ideal of the *sannyāsin* has dominated the life of India from the time of the *Ṛṣis* of the *Upaniṣads*. To follow this ideal, kings lay down their crowns and sceptres and assume the garb of poverty, fighting heroes forget the pride of victory and break their weapons, and skilled traders and workmen pursue their toil with steadfast mind surrendering to God the fruits thereof.

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[28] *Sarva bhutamayam harim. Vi'snu Purāna* I, 19, 9.

[29] *Manu* XII, 118.

These *sannyāsins*, as a rule, are the helpers of humanity. The greatest of them, like Śankara and Ramanuja, Ramananda and Kabir, have entered into the life-blood of the nation and laid the foundations of its religion. It is, however, true that in India, as in Mediaeval Europe, many ascetics made the mistake of escaping into the wilderness from the worries of the world. These hermits of the cloister and monks of the desert are voices astray in the dark. Their perpetual consciousness of sin and their pre-occupation with their own salvation show that they have lost their lives in their anxiety to save them. As the tide of monasticism which swept over Europe in the Middle Ages is not true to the teaching of Jesus, who asks us to look upon ourselves as servants trusted by the master, porters bidden to watch, stewards to whom much is committed, sons to whom the father confides his affairs, so the deserters from battle of life are not the true *sannyāsins*, who are prepared to suffer for mankind, with intense humility, glowing faith and sincere love.

To reach the highest state it is not always necessary to adhere literally to the rules of *dharma*. There are cases of sudden conversion, uprushes of the spirit from seemingly commonplace souls, astonishing moral elevation among men who have not learned the highest lesson of existence. The rules of *dharma*, however, represent the normal growth of spirit. The freed souls sometimes smile at the irrelevance of the painful scrupulosities and anxious questionings about ceremonial propriety which worry those in the lower stages of life. The order of *sannyāsins* is open to men of all castes No man, however, should desire liberation without paying his three debts[30]—to the gods by means of hymns and prayers, to the *pitris* or the ancestors by gifts and charity and social service and by the rearing up of progeny, and to the *Ṛṣis* by passing on to others the instruction received by himself.

The Hindu *dharma* has room for all kinds of men, the dispassionate old who have retired from the business of life and the eager pushful young who are keen on worldly success. The four castes and orders are not intended to be special moulds into which the Indian people are thrown, but forms capable of embracing the whole of humanity. Without the employment of force or eagerness for exploitation, Hinduism has been able to civilize a large part of Asia. What has attracted it is not imperialist expansion, but the cultural conquest, the peaceful penetration of the thought and mind of the peoples which it achieves by its own spirituality. From the kingdom of Khotan in Central Asia to the island of Java, which lies on the way between India and Australia, the creative urge of the Hindu genius found its expression in life and art. Java had Hindu settlers as far back as the second century A.D., and she has remained since then predominantly Hindu and Buddhist. Today, Japan, China and Burma look to India as their spiritual home even as Christians look to Palestine. Wherever we go from Russia to China, at Samarkand, at Tibet, we can trace the influence of Indian civilization. All these pale into insignificance when we remember that there are records of Indian culture in Western Asia, in the plains of Mesopotamia, in the regions watered by the river

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[30] See *Manu* VI, 35.

Tigris and Euphrates. Inscribed tablets discovered at Boghaz-koi, assigned by competent scholars to 1400 B.C., speak to us of people who were worshipping the Hindu gods. This influence of India is not because her religion is old or her empires are great, not because she developed weapons of destruction or exercised force on a large scale, but because she had an intelligent understanding of the deeper unity in the midst of all diversity. Wherever she went, the deep and silent influence of her vision of the unity of all things in God pervaded. All the mighty impulses that entered into India were synthesized on the same plan. All religions she welcomed, since she realized from the cloudy heights of contemplation that the spiritual landscape at the hill-top is the same, though the pathways from the valley are different. To those who were wandering at random in the plains without suspecting that all roads lead to the same top, she says: "Raise your eyes. Things in the valley separate us. Up yonder, high above us, we are all one. The variety of ways has meaning at the foot of the hill, but if we understand what they signify on the snowy summits, we shall know that all are reaching out for God." It may be that India with her assimilative genius may yet succeed in harmonising the mighty currents of the world's great religions that have met on her soil.

The Hindu Idea of God

RELIGION as a human institution is a living organism. It possesses the same kind of unity and self-identity which organic things have, the unity of a continuously changing life as against that of an unchanging creed. Its spirit is to be found not in what it was in a past stage, nor even in what it is now. Religion requires to be interpreted "according to its meaning and not according to its lisping expression," even as Empedocles was expounded by Aristotle (*Metaphysics* I, 985 a 3). If we survey the successive stages of the history of a religion, we get an idea of something deep and fundamental, which is ever expressing itself anew, though never finding perfect expression. This growing ideal, this operative principle, which is inadequately expressed in any specific stage, is the real spirit, the meaning or the idea which informs the whole historical movement.

If we ask for the spirit of the Hindu religion, it is to be found in its insistence on the reality of spiritual experience. We are at grips with reality in the inner depths of the soul. This insistence on the inwardness of religion, its subjective or experimental character is maintained throughout the history of Hinduism. When the Hindus look back to the Vedic period as the epoch of their founders, it means that the *Ṛṣis* were the pioneer spirits, the first researchers in the realm of spirit. The Sanskrit word *Ṛṣi* is from the root "*dṛṣ*", to see. Religion is sight, vision, experience. The truths announced by the *Ṛṣis* are evolved not as the result of logical reasoning or systematic philosophy, but are the products of spiritual intuition, *dṛṣṭi*, vision. The *Ṛṣis* are not so much the authors of the truths registered in the *Vedas* as the seers who were able to discern the eternal truths by raising their life-spirit to the plane of universal spirit. Their utterances are based not on transient vision but on continuous experience of resident life and power. *Sadā paśyanti sūrayah*. If the *Vedas* are regarded as the highest authority, it is because the most exacting of all authorities is the authority of facts. God is not the ideal we cherish, but the Real we apprehend. Spiritual experience is not a species of imaginative thinking, but is the closest communion with Reality.

The saint who knows God by acquaintance and not simply by hearsay does not want a definition of God. Doubt and disbelief are impossible for him. Nothing can disturb his sense of certainty, strange and simple. But for the sake of ordinary human beings, who are religious at second-hand, who wish to enjoy the consolations of religion without undergoing the labour of being religious, who wish to be guided by myth and ritual in the path of religion, we require imagery to clothe the vision. Besides, the only way to impart our experience to others, elucidate its implications, defend its validity against hostile criticism is by means of logic and language. Hinduism offers us a graduated scale of interpretations from the most impersonal to the crudely personal.

When the individual who has had the insight attempts to interpret his experience in the light of logic and common sense, he adopts an attitude of faith which is urged by its own needs to posit the transcendent Reality. He knows that the soul has dealings, intimate, direct and luminous, with a plane of being, different from that with which the senses deal, more resplendent but not less real than the conventional one which the understanding presents. Reason, revelation and spiritual experience alike bear witness to the reality of a Being, spiritual in its essence, which is the ground of all that is, "whose shadow is immortality and death". *Yasya chāya-mṛtam, yasya mṛtyuḥ* (Ṛg. Veda X,121). Ineffability is the most striking feature of spiritual experience. When we seek to define the experienced reality, we are compelled to use forms and conceptions, but the real exceeds the most comprehensive of them. Buddha admits the reality of spiritual experience, but refuses to interpret it as the revelation of anything beyond itself. For him, the view that spiritual experience gives us a direct contact with God is an interpretation and not an immediate datum. Buddha attempts to keep close to the given, and is content with the affirmation that a deeper universe of spirit penetrates the visible and tangible world. Śankara, the great Hindu philosopher and theologian, argues that all forms contain an element of untruth and the Real is beyond all forms. The *Upaniṣads*, Buddha and Śankara and his followers admit that the pure luminous Spirit, without division or duality, unique, existent beyond, or rather, within the world of multiplicity and change, is an unconditioned existence, beyond all possibility of adequate expression by thought or description by speech. We confess without confession that the glory of God is inexplicable, beyond the reach of speech and mind. "It is other than the known and above the unknown." (*Kena Upaniṣad* I, 3.) "The eye goes not thither, nor speech nor mind." (*Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* III, 8, 8). There is, however, a danger in this intellectual modesty and spiritual humility. Buddha's reticence on the question of the Absolute exposed him to the charge of atheism. By denying all attributes and relations we seem to be reducing ultimate reality to bare existence, which is absolute vacuity. Śankara urges that only the feeble-minded will confuse the negation of empirical qualities with the negation of all being. The negative accounts are intended to convey the soul's sense of the transcendent majesty of the Absolute, that it is the "wholly other", of whom nought may be predicated save in negations.

Hinduism is not content with this negative account. The three noteworthy features of spiritual experience are reality, awareness, and freedom. If some parts of our experience come to us with these characteristics, it implies the possibility that all experience is capable of being received in the same manner. The consciousness to which all experience is present in its own immediacy, revealedness, and freedom from anything which is not itself, is the divine consciousness, that which is our ideal. In the divine status, reality is its own immediate witness. its own self-awareness, its own freedom of complete being. There is nothing which is not gathered up in its own being, nothing which is not revealed in it, and there is utter absence of all discord. It is perfect being, perfect consciousness, and perfect freedom, *sat*, *chit* and *ananda*. Thought and its forms, will and its expressions, love and its harmonies are based on it. These human counterparts involve duality, tension, strain. Hence the inadequacy of the human and finite categories to the perfection of the divine. The Supreme is real, not true—is perfect, not good. Its freedom is its life, its essential spontaneity.

While the fulness of spiritual being transcends our categories, its nature is still akin to the highest kind of being we are aware of in ourselves. If the real were utterly transcendent to the self of man, it would be impossible for us to apprehend even dimly its presence. We would not be able to say that the Supreme is wholly other. There is in the self of man, at the very centre of his being, deeper than his intellect, something which is akin to the Supreme. There is a real ground in man's deepest being for the experience of reality. God's revelation and man's contemplation seem to be two sides of one fact. The con-substantiality of the spirit in man and God is the conviction fundamental to all spiritual wisdom. It is not merely a matter of inference. In the spiritual experience itself, the barriers between the self and the universal spirit drop away. We belong to the real, and the real is reflected in us. The great text, *Tat tvam asi*, That art thou, is the simple statement of an experienced fact. The Biblical saying: "So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created He him," (Genesis, I, 27) asserts that in the soul of man is contained the true revelation of God. "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord." (Proverbs, XX, 27.) According to Plato, man is potentially a participator in the eternal mode of being which he can make his own by living in detachment from the fleeting shadows of the earth. "I and My Father are One," is Jesus' way of expressing the same profound truth.

God is the infinite spirit who is both in us and out of us. If God were not in us there would be no sense of need; if God were not out of us, there would be no sense of worship. If we emphasize the transcendence of the Supreme to the human Self, our religion becomes devotional. Our highest knowledge of God is only partial. There always remains something which is unknown and unspoken. The specifically religious consciousness insists on the sense of communion with a higher than ourselves with whom it is impossible for the individual to get assimilated. There are many degrees in this personal relationship ranging from the feeling of utter humiliation in the presence of the Divine Majesty to the communion with a Supreme Love on whose grace the worst sinner can count. To compare the Supreme with the highest kind of being we know is nearer the truth than to compare Him with anything lower. The religious devotee envisages the supreme reality in the form of a personal God who is the source, guide and destiny of the world. The difference between the Supreme as absolute Spirit and the Supreme as personal God is one of standpoint and not of essence. It is a difference between God as He is and God as He seems to us. Personality is a symbol, and if we ignore its symbolic character it shuts us out from the truth.

Hinduism is the symbol of India's spiritual vision. It is based on the intuition of the oneness and wholeness of supreme spirit. On the belief that human life everywhere and always is a part and parcel of the divine being it has cultivated a sort of religious hospitality. It recognises that more than one reading of the experience is possible. If a number of us watch a sunset in summer, our experiences in the world of thought and feeling may not be identical, and our articulations of them are bound to vary. But this variety of interpretation need not be used as a support for scepticism.

Islam and Indian Thought

We find at the present day an eager quest in many directions after a higher wisdom, a more adequate philosophy of life than what satisfied our fathers. Traditional bonds of religious opinion are loosened as hardly ever before, and men claim absolute freedom to think as they like and mould their theories of life anew under the impulses of the hour. Novelties of thought seem to have a greater fascination for our modernist minds than the results of ancient wisdom and the modesties of ancient reverence. The present unsettlement is a challenge to the ancient creeds to revindicate their validity and usefulness. The spiritual leaders of all progressive religions are now busy, rethinking their traditional views so as to rescue them from the assaults of advancing knowledge and experience. In the book under review, Sir Ahmed Hussain, a distinguished Indian Moslem of broad culture and religious seriousness, attempts to indicate the lines along which the religion of Islam should be interpreted if it is not to conflict with modern ideals of science and philosophy. We get from it an idea of the kind of contribution which India is likely to make to the future reconstruction of Islam.

The development which a religion assumes in any country depends upon its cultural tradition and national character. In Arabia, Islam was a simple lofty theism, quite a stranger to the refinements of the later centuries. When it subdued the Persian people, the Semitic tendencies yielded to the mystic ones. The incomparable beauty of the primitive Arab tradition gave place to rich philosophy and gorgeous mythology in which Mohammad became a mysterious being suspended between heaven and earth. About 70 millions of the population of India are followers of Islam, and the vast majority of them are ethnologically of the same type as the Hindus. It is but natural that the Indian form of Islam should have its own features. Till the other day, the Indian Moslem felt it to be his proud privilege to bring to bear on the interpretation of Islam his own spiritural heritage. Latterly, however, a curious notion has got hold of some of our, strange to say, educated Mohammadan brethren, that by transferring their allegiance to the faith of Islam, they became the descendants of the Moors of Spain and the Caliphs of Baghdad. They regarded themselves as culturally and socially distinct from their Hindu fellow countrymen. We do not change our whole mental make-up, simply because we change our intellectual beliefs or religious convictions. To change one's creed is not to cut oneself off from the past of one's country or its ideals. It is a welcome sign of the times that the Indian leaders of Moslem thought and practice are realising the common spiritual heritage of India and protesting against the artificial cleavages which false prophets and designing politicians have encouraged. Whatever our faiths be, the same blood runs in our veins and we are all heirs of a great spiritual inheritance. What "A. E." says of Ireland is truer of India. "We are among the few races still remaining on earth whose traditions run back to the gods and the divine origin of things."[1] The past of India reaches back into the mists of antiquity, and hence many traditions appeal to us, even against our will sometimes, touch hidden chords, stir the memory and open the forgetful eyes. The spirit of India is the *elan vital*, the brooding oversoul which makes us all Indians. With a spacious spiritual background, it is the privilege of the Indian Moslem to interpret the faith of Islam in its truest, highest and noblest sense, so as to distinguish it from the creed professed today by the ignorant bigot, the political intriguer and the religious fanatic. If the Indian Moslem combines his inherited tradition with his acquired faith and effects a synthesis of the old and the new, he will be led to emphasize those neglected aspects of the truth of Islam which really promoted culture and civilization and brought to life a dying world and discard those unimportant details which happened to be exaggerated out of all proportion on account of historical accidents. He will break the yoke of the crystallised religion which pervades and blindly influences the life of the people, and give the world of Islam an interpretation of the message of Mohammad, which, I venture to say, will be more in accord with the spirit of the Prophet than with the dogmatic developments of his later followers. The Hon'ble Mr. Amir Ali in his great book on *The*

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[1] *The Interpreters*.

Spirit of Islam (on which I have drawn freely in this paper) and Sir Ahmed Hussain in his *Notes on Islam* give us a foretaste of the wonderful flowers which will grow out of the seed-bed of India's past

II

What appeals to the Indian imagination in the life of Mohammad is his deeply religious nature. Trying to peer into the mysteries of creation, Mohammad used to betake himself for prayer and meditation to a cave on Mount Hira and there he used to remain whole nights plunged in deep thought and meditation. With him, religion was an effort to know the truth and live it. By interpreting religion as life, we adopt a sane attitude to creeds and traditions. Creeds are true only to the extent that they correspond to the knowledge of the facts of life. Experience is not merely the fulfilment but also the test of creeds, and every age is called upon to reinterpret the creeds in the light of growing experience. The restatement of the principles of Islam given by Sir Ahmed Hussain is naturally neither quite orthodox, but something midway between the two (p. 7). Our author is not prepared to swear by the literal interpretations of the words of the *Qu'ran* as given by the Church doctors but feels free to interpret them as seems most reasonable to him. In doing so he is true to the spirit of Mohammad who lays down no restrictions likely to keep enchained the conscience of advancing humanity. Revelations of God are only through the human soul and we are not compelled to believe that the wisest of those to whom they were made were free from the errors and prejudices of the age in which they lived. In the *Qu'ran* there are ever so many things of strictly local and temporary interest, which are not all relevant to religion *qua* religion. The conservatives of all creeds forget that "the dry bones of a religion are nothing, the spirit that quickens the bones is all." (p. 12). Sir Ahmed Hussain distinguishes Islam from the dogmatic Mohammadanism of some of our Moulvies. "I make a difference between Islam and Mohammadanism. The latter is not pure Islam. It has forgotten the spirit of Islam and remembers only the letter of its law." (p. 12 Note *a*)

When we take our stand on the 'experience' side of religion, we realise that the truly religious men of all faiths are nearer each other than they imagine. In the broad spirit of Hinduism, our author recognises that the truth intended by all religions is the same and quotes with approval Jalal-ud-din Rumi's saying: "All religions are in substance one and the same."[2] It is impossible for the Indian Moslem to accept whole-heartedly the spirit of exclusiveness which is a marked feature of Semitic religions. India has stood for religious freedom and harmony from the beginning of her history. In accord with this spirit, the great Akbar tried to fuse all Indians into a homogeneous nation by the unifying bond of a common religion in the practice of which both Mohammadans and Hindus would join hands, though he failed in his attempt as the conditions were not in his favour. Considerably influenced by the idealism of the *Upaniṣads*, which steer clear of all images and dogmas and thus have universal value, Dara Shukoh, the great grandson of

[2] Jalal-ud-din Rumi : *Masnavi* III, 12.

Akbar, wrote a work on *Majma'e Bahreen* or the union of the two oceans (of Hinduism and Islam). He recognised that the two religions were equally efficient in helping us to live the higher life. Sir Ahmed Hussain holds that, through different angles of approach, we may reach the same goal of salvation. "Please remember that there are many men and many minds and there are likely to be as many religions, as many conceptions of God, as many notions of His attributes and as many ideas of the beginning or end of things, as there are thinking minds" (p. 24). For those who are familiar with the practice of the mass of Mohammadans, it may perhaps be difficult to believe that this catholic view represents the teaching of the *Qu'ran*. It is, however, nothing more than the truth. The erroneous belief that there is no true religion besides Islam breeds bigotry, intolerance and fanaticism and is contrary to the teachings of the Qu'ran. "The first verse of the second Sura commands us to believe in not only what was revealed to Mohammad but also in what was revealed to those who went before him. It clearly indicates that there are, and will ever be, many true religions, of which Islam is one." (pp. 30-31).[3]

The religious genius of Mohammad is evident from the fact that he imposed no credal tests. "Whoever says 'there is no God' will attain salvation," is almost the first saying of Mohammad reported in the collections of his

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[3] The following passage from Jalal-ud-din Rumi's *Masnavi* brings out how we should sympathise with cruder forms of worship, giving credit to their sincerity:

Moses, to his horror, heard one summer day
A benighted shepherd blasphemously pray.
'Lord,' he said, 'I would I knew Thee, where Thou art,

traditions. Mohammad protests against the exclusiveness of the Jewish and the Christian creeds and declares that all those who believe in God and do His will are eligible for salvation. "They say, verily, none shall enter Paradise except those who are Jews or Christians. . . . Produce your proof, if ye speak the truth. Nay, but he who directeth towards God and doth that which is right, he shall have his reward with his Lord." (Sura V, 105-6). "Verily,

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That for Thee I might perform a servant's part
Comb Thy hair, and dust Thy shoes and sweep Thy room
Bring Thee every morning milk and honeycomb.'
Moses cried, 'Blasphemer! curb thy blatant speech!
Whom art thou addressing? Lord of all and each,
Allah the Almighty? Thinkest thou He doth need
Thine officious folly? Wilt all bounds exceed?
Miscreant, have a care, lest thunderbolts should break
On our heads, and others perish for thy sake.
Without eyes He seeth, without ears He hears,
Hath no son nor partner through the endless years,
Space cannot contain Him, time He is above.
All the limits that He knows are Light and Love.'
Put to shame, the Shepherd, his poor garment rent,
Went away disheartened, all his ardour spent.
Then spake God to Moses: 'Why hast thou from me
Driven away my servant, who goes heavily?
Not for severance it was, but union
I commissioned thee to preach, O hasty one!
Hatefullest of all things is to me divorce,
And the worst of all ways is the way of force.
I made not creation, self to aggrandize
But that creatures might with me communion prize.
What though the childish tongues trip? 'Tis the heart I see,
If it really loves me in sincerity.

Quoted in Claude Field's *Mystics and Saints of Islam* (p. 154).

those who believe (the Moslems) and those who are Jews, Christians or Sabaeans, whoever hath faith in God and the last day, and worketh that which is right and good—for them shall be the reward with their Lord; there will come no fear on them; neither shall they be grieved." (Sura V, 69). With true insight Mohammad lays stress on conduct more than on doctrine. Every religion which promotes goodness is worthy of acceptance, whatever be its dogmatic details, for if we do the will, we shall know the doctrine: "To everyone have we given a law and a way. And if God had pleased, He would have made you all one people (professing one religion). But He hath done otherwise that He might try you in that which He hath severally given unto you; wherefore press forward in good works. Unto God shall ye return and He will tell you that concerning which ye disagree." (Sura V, 48[4]). According to the *Qu'ran*, Moslems are "those who believe and work righteousness," all those "who trust in the Lord and do good."[5] In conformity with this view, H. H. The Aga Khan said the other day that Mahatma Gandhi was a Moslem. Even Jesus did not say, "By their beliefs ye shall know them," but he said: "By their fruits ye shall know them," and Peter rightly observes: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him."[6]

Sir Ahmed Hussain is not wrong when he says that Islam "is not inconsistent with *true* Christianity or any other *true* religion" (p. 12), for all religions have for their essence the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Only the sectarian dogmatic creeds fight one another. The faith of Jesus is akin to the faith of Mohammad. But when St. Paul asks us to believe in Jesus as our saviour, the very God descended into humanity, a proposition which thinking Christians find it increasingly difficult to defend—Christianity becomes opposed to Islam which is naturally tempted to put forward equal claims for Mohammad. To the credit of Islam, it must be said that its view of Mohammad is a reasonable one. It regards him as a prophet or a messenger of God who reformed the religion of a considerable part of mankind. For all that, he was only a man like any other mortal, subject to sin and having need, as other men, of the mercy of God. "It is not Islam or Eman to deify Mohammad or to represent him to be akin to God, as sometimes Moulvies represent him and call him the one (Ahad) in the guise of Ahmad. Our prophet himself never claimed that he was anything nore than a mere man" (p. 37). "God has not sent me," says Mohammad, "to work wonders. He has sent me to preach to you. I never said that Allah's treasures are in my hand, that I knew the hidden things or that I was an angel . . . . who cannot even help or trust myself unless God pleaseth" (Sura XVII, 95-98; LXXII, 21-24). Yet the devotion and enthusiasm of his first followers were so great that legends arose round the figure of Mohammad. On the night the Prophet was born, it is said, the palace of Chosroes was thrown down by an earthquake, the sacred fire of the Magi was extinguished, the lake of Sawa was dried up, the Tigris overflowed, and all the idols of the world fell with their faces to the ground. These traditions fortunately never became consecrated legends. Thanks to the scepticism and incredulity of his early Arab followers, even the stories about Mohammad's nocturnal journey to Jerusalem and the voice of God, hailing him as His apostle in his wanderings near Mecca, never became so essential to the religion of Islam, as, say, those of Ascension and Resurrection to the religion of Christianity. Even the Messiahship of the prophet is not always reverenced. Witness the movement of the Wahabis, who proclaim that worship of God consists in prostrating oneself before Him, that the invocation of an intercessor near him is an act of idolatry and that the most meritorious work would be to raze the tomb of the prophet and the mausoleums of the Imams!

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[4] See also XXI, 46: XXXII, 23, 24; XXXIX, 41; XL, 13.

[5] Psalms.

[6] Acts X, 34-35.

It is impossible for a thinker like Mohammad to advocate forced conversions. We cannot compel men to change their beliefs, "Let there be no compulsion in religion" (Sura II, 257). "Wilt thou then force men to believe, when belief can come only from God?"[7] It is doubtful whether Mohammad had any idea of the conversion of non-Arabs to Islam. Religious persecutions and forced conversions, which have soiled the fair name of Islam, are repugnant to its true spirit. Omar, the persecutor of Islam, who later became its apostle, first drew the sword against those who did not blindly admit the beliefs of Islam, and the crude practices of some of Mohammad s followers led to the popular view that those who die fighting for their religious beliefs are the truer martyrs. The Indian Moslem shares with his Hindu brother faith in the freedom of conscience. Sir Abdur Rahim said the other day:

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[7] Amir Ali: *The Spirit of Islam*, p. 212.

"It is a wholly false notion that the religion and law of Islam enjoin conversion by force."[8] The Khilafat movement, whatever be its political value, has certainly helped the cause of religious freedom. Sir Charles Townshend, the defender of Kut-el-Amara, wrote recently: "The Hindu population of India has made the cause of religious freedom of all the races of India its own."[9] The spirit of India is teaching Islam to relax some of its severer aspects. Through the interaction of Islam and Hinduism, which are today looking towards each other, India's vision of harmonising the different religious systems that have met on her soil will be promoted.

III

We may now turn to the doctrinal aspect of Islam and inquire whether its conception of God is radically opposed to the Hindu view. While all religions agree about the objective reality of God, the character of the God worshipped is supposed to give distinction to each religion. According to the Hindu view, no ideas can bring out the mystery of God. God cannot be defined through logical symbols, but can be realised in the depths of the soul. If a definition is demanded, we cannot help using the resources at our disposal. We are familiar with our own consciousness and so interpret the nature of God on its analogy. God becomes the Divine personality possessing the three characteristics of truth, love and perfection, or wisdom, beauty and power, or infinitude, grace and sovereignty answering to the three aspects of our conscious

[8] *Calcutta Review,* May 1923.

[9] *Asia,* December 1922.

life, cognition, emotion and will. The Hindu conception of Trimurti is intended to bring out this threefold nature of Godhead. God as Brahma creates, as Viṣṇu redeems and as Śiva judges. Brahma creates things to suit His ideal forms. His infinite understanding is reflected in the infinite world which was, is and will be. Viṣṇu is the principle of love at the heart of the infinite power and universal rule. He helps us in our wrestlings with evil and given a push to the upward ascent. Siva is the judge, the infinite power, "able to do anything, or leave it undone or do in another manner than that in which it is actually done."[10] Whatever name he may give to his God, the Hindu has in view this unity of light, love and life. Sir Ahmed Hussain believes that all religions profess belief in one and the same reality, "one and only one God who is Infinite and Absolute, who hath neither beginning nor end, who is not conditioned or limited by anything whatever. Yazdan, Isvara, Jehovah, God, Allah are the names in different languages of the same Infinite and Absolute God."

The absolute character of God and its incomprehensibility by the finite mind are brought out in many passages of the *Qu'ran*. The very first verse says: "Say, He alone is God; God the Eternal. He begetteth not and is not begotten; there is none like unto Him." While everything else in the world is liable to change and extinction, God alone is. He is the rock in the maelstrom of events in space and time, on which we can take our stand, the only hope with which we can face the darkness of the world, its sins and iniquities, and yet nothing in the world of

[10] *Kartum akartum anyathākartum samarthaḥ.*

space and time is an adequate symbol of the wealth of God. "Sight perceives Him not, but He perceives men's sights; for He is the knower of secrets, the Aware" (Sura VI, 104). Caliph Ali condemns all anthropomorphic conceptions of God. "God was not like any object that the human mind can conceive, no attribute can be ascribed to Him which bore the least resemblance to any quality of which human beings have perception from their knowledge of material objects. The perfection of piety consists in *knowing* God; the perfection of knowledge is the affirmation of His verity; the perfection of verity is to acknowledge His unity in all sincerity; and the perfection of sincerity is to deny all attributes to the Deity. God has no relation to place, time or measure."[11] Man cannot be content with this negative ideal, and so he insists on looking upon God as a person. The opening verse of the *Qu'ran* says: "Praise be to God, Nourisher of the worlds, the Compassionate, the Merciful and King of the day of reckoning." While Vaishnavism and Christianity lay the greatest stress on God as love, Judaism and Islam exaggerate the aspect of God as power. God is Omnipotent Energy and the Eternal Judge. Mohammad frequently speaks of the day of reckoning, when the deeds done by man shall be weighed by the Eternal Judge, when heaven and earth shall be folded up and none be near but God. The other aspects are not, however, neglected. God is not merely the Judge but also "the forgiver of sin, receiver of penitence" (Sura XL, 1-2), the guide of the erring, the deliverer from every affliction, the friend of the bereaved, the consoler of the afflicted, whose love "is more tender than that of the mother-bird for her young."[12] Passages emphasising the love of God frequently occur. "Have mercy, O Lord, for of the merciful Thou art the best" (Sura XXII, 118). "Is not He the more worthy who answereth the oppressed when they cry to Him and taketh off their ills, and maketh you to succeed your sires on the earth?" (Sura XXVII, 62). "Seek pardon of your Lord and be turned unto Him; verily, my Lord is merciful, loving" (Sura XI, 90). "Say, O my servants, who have transgressed to your own injury, despair not of God's mercy, for all sins doth God forgive. Gracious, merciful is He." (Sura XXXIX, 53). The very name *Ar-Rahman*, with which each chapter opens, expresses the conviction that divine love enfolds all creation. It works in man so as to remove the veil from the heart of the creature and draw Him near to God. God is also the creator and nourisher of the world. He is not so much a cold distant Deity separated from the World as the indwelling Presence in nature and history. God is in the East and the West. Therefore whichever side you turn, you will see the face of God." (I, 115). "And He is within you: Why do you not see Him?" (LI, 21). "We will soon show them our sight in all horizons and in their own souls, until it shall become quite clear to them that it is the truth" (XII, 53). The three attributes of creation, redemption and judgment are assigned to God, and the emphasis on Divine unity saves us from tritheism.

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[11] Quoted in *The Spirit of Islam*, p. 416

The individual soul is made by God and it has no rest until it returns to God. Its complex nature should be made an offering to God. We must use our intellect so as to recognise the presence of God in all things. Belief in the existence of the Supreme naturally produces the sense of entire dependence on God. We pray to God and express in meek humility our thankfulness to Him. The central theme of all prayers is self-humiliation, glorification of the giver of all good and reliance on His mercy. We pour out our grateful hearts through prayers which can be offered anywhere on God's earth. We seek His guidance in daily life and struggle to live up to His ideal. Whether we begin with a logical search for reality (*jnāna*) or prayerful devotion to God (*bhakti*) or submission to His laws, the end is the same.

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[12] *The Spirit of Islam*, pp. 150, 157

The ethics of Islam is of an exalted character. If we are to be worthy of our Father in Heaven, we should do nothing which denies the divine origin of man. To develop the truly religious spirit, Mohammad enjoins the observance of prayer, fasting, alms-giving and pilgrimages and practice of self-denial. Universal charity is insisted on. Hospitality becomes a religious duty. Chastity is recognised as a virtue. Drunkenness, gambling and other excesses are condemned. Moral life constitutes the essence of piety. "Those who abstain from vanities and the indulgence of their passions, give alms, offer prayers, and tend well their trusts and their covenants, these shall be the heirs of eternal happiness." (Sura XXIII, 8). "Every Moslem who clothes the naked will be clothed by God in the green robes of Paradise."[13] Ibrahim Ben Adhem's story, which is the basis of Leigh Hunt's well-known poem *Abou Ben Adhem*, points the moral that the friend of man is the friend of God. Whatever the actual practice of the mass of Mohammadans may be, the religion of Islam is not indifferent to animal life, but insists on its sacredness. "There is no beast on earth, nor bird which flieth with its wings, but the same is a people like unto you—unto the Lord shall they return."[14] In the matter of animal sacrifices, the Indian Moslem should remember the significant verse of the Qu'ran : "It is not the flesh or the blood of that which ye sacrifice which is acceptable to God; it is your piety which is acceptable to the Lord." (Sura XXII, 37). Forgiveness and non-resistance are not supposed to be a part of the religion of Islam. It is worthwhile, in this connection, meditating on the spirit of the following passages: "Turn away evil with that which is better." (Sura XLI, 34). Speaking of Paradise, Mohammad says: "It is prepared for the goodly who give alms in prosperity and adversity, who bridle their anger and forgive men; for God loveth the beneficent." (Sura XLII, 7). The many minor details about food, divorce, etc., are not directly connected with the religion of Islam. Though Mohammad laid down certain injunctions about them, having in view the circumstances of his time, there is nothing sacrosanct about them. As the Hon'ble Mr. Amir Ali puts it, "with regard to the sumptuary regulations, precepts and prohibitions of Mohammad, it must be remembered that they were called forth by the temporary circumstances of the times and people. With the disappearance of such circumstances, the need for these laws has also disappeared. To suppose therefore that every Islamic precept is necessarily immutable

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[13] *The Spirit of Islam*, p. 64.

Ibid, p. 158.

is to do an injustice to history and the development of the human intellect." The Prophet did not inculcate the subjection of human reason to blind authority. A religion which is so strictly limited by common sense on all sides cannot be made to support inhuman practices today. It is for the leaders of Indian Moslem opinion to divide in what details the actual practices of the Indian Moslems require modification, if they should live up to the ideal of loving one another, bearing injustice without rebellion, doing harm to none and devoting oneself to universal peace and goodwill.

Those who deny the injunctions of the Qu'ran will have a terrible time of it on the day of judgment, while those who conform to them will return unto their Lord, their source and support. The ascension of Mohammad is symbolic of the union of the finite and the infinite. Sufism makes out that the end of human development is oneness with God, for he who beholdeth God is God-like. Jalal-ud-din Rumi describes the ascent of men to God through the various stages in these words:

> From the inorganic we developed into the vegetable kingdom.
> Dying from the vegetable we rose to animal,
> And leaving the animal we became men,
> Then what fear that death will lower us?
> The next transition will make us an angel,
> Then shall we rise from angels and merge in the Nameless.
> All existence proclaims: "Unto Him shall we return."

Union with God is the end of life. The Sufi Al-Hujviri says: "When a man becomes annihilated from his attributes he attains to perfect subsistence, he is neither near nor far, neither stranger nor intimate, neither sober nor intoxicated, neither separated nor united; he has no name or sign or brand or mark."[15] While the Sufi doctrine holds absorption in God as the goal of perfection, the Qu'ran gives us vivid pictures of the kind of life which the liberated enjoy. The descriptions of this life are realistic and somewhat sensuous too. They are not, however, to be literally interpreted. "O, thou soul which art at rest, return unto thy Lord, pleased and pleasing Him, enter thou among my servants and enter thou my garden of felicity." (LXXXIX, 27-30). The two views correspond to those held by the absolutistic and the theistic interpreters of the Vedanta. The process of the growth of personality cannot stop until the end of perfection is reached and the future will have opportunities for the development of character.

The future depends on our present life. "Yonder will every soul experience that which it hath bargained for." (X, 30). Paradise or hell is the result of our own actions. It is also sometimes urged that the silent inscrutable will of God directs all things. In the later history of Islam, the problem of the reconciliation of divine sovereignty with human responsibility figures much. There are passages in the Qu'ran which seem to indicate that God acts in an arbitrary manner. "He pardons what He will and punishes whom He will, inasmuch as God is a supreme sovereign." (II, 184; see also III, 25; V, 18; XIII, 31). "Verily God leads astray whomsoever He will and directs to himself those who are penitent" (XIII, 27). There are also passages which emphasise human responsibility.

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[15] *The Spirit of Islam*, p. 172, 213.

"No soul shall labour but for itself, and no burdened one shall bear another's burden." (II, 286). "Whosoever gets to himself a sin, gets it solely on his own responsibility." (IV, III). "Whoever goes astray, he himself bears the whole responsibility of wandering." (X, 108). Sir Ahmed Hussain contends that fatalism is not a part of the Moslem creed (p. 12, note *d*). "The Prophet distinctly taught that we should first of all do whatever lies in our power and then leave the rest to God. We are apt to forget the first part of his precept and cling to its second part only which accords with our tropical laziness." (p. 62, note *b*). Man is not the sport of fate. He has the freedom to choose the right or the wrong. God does not compel us to good or evil but shows us the way to truth and purity and helps us to observe the laws, though He punishes us when we neglect them. Caliph Ali says: "O, ye servants of my Lord, fulfil the duties that are imposed on you, for in their neglect is abasement; your good works alone will render easy the road to death. Remember each sin increases the debt and makes the chain heavier. The message of mercy has come; the path of truth is clear; obey the command that has been laid on you; live in purity, work in piety and ask God to help you in every endeavour and to forgive your past transgressions."[16] The decrees of God are only the laws of the spiritual world. God helps those who seek His help and bestows grace on the penitent sinner who like to purify his soul from impure longings. Caliph Ali says: "Say not that man is *compelled*, for that is attribution of tyranny to God, nor say that

The Spirit of Islam, p. 409.

man has absolute discretion—rather that we are furthered by His help and grace in our endeavours to act righteously, and we transgress because of our neglect (of his commands)."[17]

Islam is a religion without mystery. Its simplicity is its strength and beauty. It does not indulge in any theological subtleties, supernatural paradoxes or metaphysical pretensions. It is natural religion with one central principle that God makes, upholds, governs and perfects all things. This serene lofty theism is best suited for the simple-minded and the unsophisticated. On its institutional side, it is perfectly rational. It has no caste or priests, requires no sacrifice or ceremonial, recognises no ritual likely to distract the mind from the thought of the one God. Pilgrimage to Mecca and the shrine of Kaaba is the only external aid insisted on by Mohammad from a purely practical motive. During prayers, the Moslem turns his face towards Mecca, the glorious centre from which was announced first the gospel of Mohammad (Sura II, 139, 144). Attention to Mecca helps the Moslem to realise that he is one of the band of the faithful, united by common allegiance to Mohammad as the Prophet of God, filled with the same hopes, reverencing the same thing, and worshipping the same ideals. Democracy is the key-note of Islam on its practical side. This is what enabled it to succeed as a missionary religion. It invites every human being to its ample fold, whatever be his colour or race. It recognises the capacity of all to become the servants of God.

In each human spirit is a Christ concealed,

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[17] *Ibid* p. 410

To be helped or hindered, to be hurt or healed,
If from any human soul you lift the veil,
You will find a Christ here hidden without fail.[18]

The Moslems face without fear the logical implications of the doctrine of *Tat tvam asi* and make no distinctions between man and man, at any rate in their mosques. The same cannot be said of Hindu temples or Christian Churches, in spite of all the lip homage paid to the principle of equality of all men in the eyes of God. The simple creed of Islam, careful of its two principles of Divine Fatherhood and human brotherhood, has been potent enough to expel from many dark places of the earth barbarous practices and train millions of mankind to a better life. It has helped the backward races to escape from the labyrinth of sensuous polytheism and get rid of their devil worship and fetishism, infanticide and human sacrifices, magic and witchcraft. It will have a great future, if it cuts off with an unsparing hand the poisonous outgrowths and realises its two central principles in life.

Hinduism has not sufficiently profited from her experience of Islam. It is quite true the Reform movements such as those of Chaitanya, Kabir, and Nanak were much influenced by the spirit of Islam. The monotheistic elements of Hinduism have become more emphasised after the spread of Islam in India. Yet Hinduism could easily have learnt more. Ignorance of others' faiths is the mother of injustice and error. Some of the practices of the uncultured Moslems blinded the eyes of the Hindus to the ideals of Islam. While there is much for Islam to learn from a sympathetic understanding of Hinduism, there is also much for Hinduism to learn from Islam. For one thing, Hinduism must learn to be less compromising and more emphatic in its denunciation of imperfect conceptions of God and cruder modes of worship. Hinduism fondly believed that truth would slowly work its way and lower conceptions would be themselves repudiated. As surely as darkness flies before the rays of the sun, Hinduism thought, so surely would falsehood vanish before truth. This has remained a pious hope. Those who are aware of the highest conceptions of God, are found engrossed in the most revolting practices of barbarism. Those who glibly talk of *ahimsa* are seen encouraging animal sacrifices. Hinduism need not give up its tolerance, but it should see to it that its judgment of values is kept up and progress is steadily achieved. We must also learn to democratise our institutions and do away with the wrangling creeds, unintelligible dogmas and oppressive institutions under which the soul of man is literally crushed. Both Islam and Hinduism at their best teach that true religion is to serve God in truth and purity and obey His laws reverently in all the affairs of life.

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[18] Claude Field's *The Mystics and Saints of Islam*, p. 159.

Hindu Thought and Christian Doctrine

In a paper on Hinduism contributed by Mr. Greaves to the Oxford Conference,[1] it is said: "Speaking broadly, Hindus are often about as far in advance of the Hinduism they profess as are nominal Christians behind the Christianity which they are supposed to obey." This judgment is a generous one, so far as Hindu practice is concerned, though its implication that Hindu thought is unworthy of this practice is open to question. We are all too ready to condemn what we do not understand and those who judge Hinduism from without are not able to understand its vitality. The great things for which men have lived and died; and are still living and dying, cannot be grasped without the exercise of the spirit of what is well called 'natural piety'. If with this feeling we put ourselves at the point of view of the .other religions, we shall see that the same fundamentals are found emphasised in all religions, that God is, that man stands in some relation to

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[1] *Modern Churchman*, October 1922.

God, and that intercourse of some kind is possible between God and man who has in him the desire to be in harmony with God. The differences among the living progressive religions of the world relate to accents and emphases, which are traceable to social environments and historic circumstances. It is a matter of great satisfaction that under the impulse of higher criticism, the increasing knowledge of nature, idealist philosophy, comparative religion, the psychology of the religious consciousness and a deeper acquaintance with mystic experience, Christian thinkers are engaged in a re-construction of belief that brings Christianity near the Hindu religion and promises to bridge the gulf that separates the Christian from other religions. It is my endeavour in this paper to state briefly—a systematic discussion is not possible in a single article—some of the fundamentals of the Hindu faith so as to indicate its affinities to the Christian doctrine. By the fundamentals of Hinduism, I mean those common ideas which have characterised the different forms of Hinduism in their long history, regarding the problems of God, man and his future.

II

According to the Hindu view, the mystery of God cannot be comprehended by the mind of man. Many scriptural texts lay stress on the inadequacy of the finite mind to understand the subtlety of God's nature. There are endless attributes and aspects in the Supreme of which we, human beings, have no knowledge. No Hindu, however, rests content with this negative view. He insists on interpreting the nature of God on the analogy of his own personality, which is a complex of cognitions, affections and desires. He speaks of God as a personal being, *puruśa*, with qualities of thought, love and power. All the time, he is conscious that God's personality is only a mask, the revelation of something higher under this form. God's personality is not limited and exclusive like the human personality, for in God we live, move, and have our being.

Since God's personality is the unity of wisdom, love and goodness, His activities in relation to the world are those of creation, redemption and judgment. Brahmā, representing the cognitive aspect of God, creates; Viśnu, representing God as love, redeems; Śiva, who is God omnipotent, power and perfection, judges. The order of the universe reflects the mind of God. The transformation of the eternal ideas of God into the space-time is a gradual one. All things struggle continuously to get rid of their imperfections that they might conform to their eternal archetypes, that is, realise God's purpose for them. The cosmic process is a continuous evolution where things develop new and higher qualities in conflict with the old ones. The conception of Brahma brings out the infinitude of God and His unceasing creative activity. The aim of God's creation is the manifestation by His creatures of their divine origin and destiny. Of all objects of God's creation only man can manifest fully the character of his origin and reveal the trûth of things. God, when He created man, presented to him the ideal which he should elect, the law which he should obey, if he is to realise his destiny. The *Bhagavad Gītā* (III, 10) says: "Brahmā created man along with the law of sacrifice."

The law is the means by which we can realise God's ideal for us and grow into His likeness. But we forget our origin, forget our place in the plan of God, forget the law of sacrifice, and lose ourselves in selfish pursuits. It is then that the need for God's redemptive power arises. The All-great Brahmā is the All-loving Viṣnu too, His love and grace are around us, behind what appears as space-time, the material world, organic life and human history. Viṣnu, the all-pervading, actively helps every human soul to fight against sin and stupidity. He is the central core of our being, serving as an inner light, which is too holy to consent to any evil, too real to cling to the fleeting and too loving to regard anything as alien to itself. He is God the redeemer and is the security that the world is progressing towards the good. But He does not act against our will. His redemptive activity takes place in accordance with the order created by Brahmā. God does not care to exalt Himself by condemning the laws of creation which His own fingers framed. Though Viṣnu is ever ready to help us, our sin and stupidity constitute barriers against the operation of His grace. Even though we have sinned and thus betrayed the God in us, yet if we turn to God in faith, He helps us out of our difficulty. "Even if a very wicked man worships me, with devotion to none else, he should be regarded as good, for he has rightly resolved. Soon does he become righteous and attain to eternal peace. Boldly canst thou proclaim that my devotee is never destroyed," says Krishna in the *Gītā*.[2] There is thus a chance for even the worst sinner. God is not merely truth and love, but also justice. He is the embodiment of power and perfection, the judge of good and evil, the lord of *karma, karmadhyakṣah*. When we sin, it is Śiva the judge, who punishes us.

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[2] IX, 30-31.

Brahma, Viṣnu and Śiva are not three different persons but three different aspects of one God who has no second, distinguished according to His different functions. Brahmā creates us with certain potentialities. Viṣnu helps us to realise them through the overcoming of opposition, and Śiva signifies the victorious self-maintenance of the good. As the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* puts it, "the source from which all things come, that by which they are sustained and that into which they enter" are one. God is the truth, the way and the life. He is one viewed as threefold, *eka eva tridhā smṛtaḥ*. Creation, redemption, and judgment are the three fundamental aspects of the creative evolution.

When we regard the Supreme as Divine self-consciousness functioning in the three ways of creation, redemption and judgment, it follows that the world, with reference to which these functions have a meaning, is organically related to God. The world is the body of God, according to some *Upaniṣads*, the *Bhagavadgita* and theistic *Vedānta*. Hindu thought is not afraid of asserting the presence of God in all things. It has no faith in a transcendent God distinct from the world, living in a monotonous solitude of His own. Krishna says in the *Gītā* that all the beauty of the world, all its truth, all its goodness are so many modes in which God is manifested. Of His glory Nature is the veil, of His word it is the expression, of His thought it is the embodiment. This, however, is not Pantheism in the crude sense of the term. Distinctions are made between the ideal and the actual, the good and its opposite. Hinduism insists on the need for self-transcendence on the part of man. This means that there is something beyond what actually is, which man is struggling to realise. The necessity for redemption shows that there are elements from which we are to be redeemed. If all that is is equally divine, there would be no need for redemption or judgment. God is not only in Nature as its life, but is beyond it as its Creator, its Lord and its Judge. Hinduism does not subscribe to the Hegelian identification of the process of the world with the life of the Absolute. The world is rooted in God, but God does not die if the world perishes. In His own being He is independent of the world and above it. His spirit moves in the world, informing it, governing it, and yet it is by itself beyond it all.

That the water of a stream is purest at its source is certainly true of Christianity. If we turn to the life and sayings of Jesus, we get a clear idea of the central principles of that religion. Yahweh of the Old Testament was essentially a national deity. Though some prophets like Hosea and Isaiah regarded Him as the God of the whole earth, they did not altogether escape from their provincial views. Even for them Israel remained God's chosen race and the heathen nations who would submit to Yahweh's authority and come to worship at Zion would occupy a position of subjection. Jesus purged the idea of God of all particularism. He was not much interested in God as He is in Himself, but revealed to us with remarkable insight the nature of God in relation to man and the world. Though Jesus referred to the three aspects of wisdom, love and power, the conditions of his time led him to emphasise the love of God. Even the better class of Jewish prophets exaggerated the aspect of God's judgment and His wrath. Isaiah for instance says: "Men shall go into the caves of the rocks, and into the holes of the earth from before the terror of the Lord, and from the glory of His majesty, when He ariseth to shake mightily the earth." Jesus on the other hand laid stress on the conception of God as Father and His love for us as His children. God is pre-eminently love, He is our redeemer. But the other aspects were not neglected by Jesus. The orderliness of the world reveals the wisdom of God. The sun shines impartially on the just and the unjust, and so does the rain fall. Special providences are not accepted by Jesus[3], who rebukes the petty egotism which imagines that the natural order of the universe is interrupted to inflict exemplary punishment on evil doers or bring rich rewards to individuals of exceptional merit. He refused to succumb to the temptation to make stones into bread. The physical cures which He effected were all according to law and he could not heal where faith was lacking. God is unalterable truth and His universe cannot be an anarchic one. God is also the judge. The judgment of God is the dominating note of the Bible. From the sentence upon Adam and Eve and the condemnation of Cain, down to the closing vision of St. John's Apocalypse, we have emphasis on the sovereignty and judgment of God. At the end of the Day, it is God's purpose that will triumph. The Christian Church, in the spirit of the Hebrew prophets, often appeals more to the terror of judgment and the wrath of God than to the sense of guilt and the grace of God.

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[3] Luke XIII, 1-5.

When the followers of Jesus raised Jesus to the rank of God, the three aspects of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Siva, infinitude, grace and sovereignty, wisdom, love and power were attributed to Him. He is the Logos or Wisdom or Word of God, who was before Abraham was. He is the Saviour who revealed His heart of love on the cross at Calvary. He is the Judge who pronounces sentence on all who offend Him. "He that cometh after me," says John the Baptist, "will gather up His wheat into the garner, but the chaff He will burn up with unquenchable fire." He will "separate the sheep from the goats."[4]

The doctrine of the Trinity not only sought to provide a place for Jesus in the unity of God but also tried to correct the one-sided view of God adopted in the Old Testament. God is not merely the infinite majesty seated on high (the Father), but is also the heart of love (the Son), and the immanent principle of the world process (the Holy Spirit). God is not the transcendent, remote from the world, but Infinite love who pours Himself out unwearyingly into the uplift of the world. Abelard and, in a manner, Aquinas support the view of the Father as Power, the old Yahweh exercising judgment (Śiva), the Son as the Logos, Word or Wisdom, the principle of creation (Brahmā), and the Holy Spirit as pervading Love (Viṣṇu). On this view, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit correspond to the Vedantic formula of Brahman as *Sat*, *Chit*, and *Ānanda*—reality, wisdom and joy. One thing is clear, that the doctrine of the Trinity is an attempt to indicate the threefold nature of God. Modern

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[4] Matthew XXV, 31-46.

Christian theology is realising that the unity of God is consistent with His three aspects, only if the latter are regarded as modes of his activity and not as three different minds or centres of consciousness.

It is frequently urged that the Hindu view exaggerates the justice of God while the Christian lays more stress on the love of God. This is, however, not altogether just. There is not much real difference on this question between the two views. Viṣnu, or God as love, is ready to help us, but He waits for our effort. He does not offer His aid against our will. He cannot save us even when we sin, unless we repent. God will do everything for us, but if we persist in our sin and selfishness and do not turn to Him, law will have its course. God cannot deny Himself. He would like to forgive all but there are sins which "shall not be forgiven, neither in this world nor in that which is to come". Even the love of God has a method according to which it works. We cannot say that this constitutes a limitation of His power. Omnipotence is not irrationality. Jesus recognises that there are laws of the spiritual world. The parables[5] of the tares, the thief, the hidden treasure, the pearl, the lost sheep, the talents, the ten virgins and the wedding garment, all imply the law that we shall be saved only by our deeds. The five foolish virgins failed to use their opportunities and so missed their end. If we expect forgiveness, we must forgive; if we would save our lives, we must lose them. Such are the inexorable laws of the spiritual world which even God's love cannot set aside. Salvation is to be earned; God cannot thrust it on us. The implication of the curious doctrine of vicârious sacrifice is that the love of God is tempered by His justice. It assumes that divine justice must be satisfied before God can forgive.

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[5] Matthew XIII, 24-30; XXIV. 43; XII, 44; XIII, 45-46; XVIII, 12; XXV, 14-30; XXV, 1-13; XXII, 1-14.

Western Christianity is a product of several influences. Its Jewish heritage, which conflicts with the Greek, inclines it to support the transcendent conception of God. For the Jew as well as the Arab, Nature seemed dry and barren; to the Greek as to the Hindu it was alive and divine. The latter did not exaggerate the distinction between the sacred and the profane, the natural and the supernatural, the spirit and the flesh. The Hindu conception is confirmed by the spirit of science with its insistence on the essential unity of Nature. The all-pervading supremacy of law keeps the lawless at arm's length. The supernatural is at the heart of Nature. As Aristotle said, spirit is the form of matter. God is the life of the world. The growing appreciation of the meaning of history and the principle of development, the fresh psychological analyses of the religious consciousness and its growths incline us to see the divine in the normal and not in deviations from it. The view of god, as one who acts upon the world externally, moulding it as a potter does clay, which has had a continuous history in Christendom from Jesus—even He was fettered much by His religious surroundings—through Paul, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, etc., is slowly yielding to a more immanent conception. A whole-hearted acceptance of Divine immanence will involve much doctrinal readjustment and many of the sacred sentiments which have twined themselves round the old idea will have to be given up. We cannot accept Divine immanence and yet be conventionally orthodox, clinging to the reality of miracles, chosen people, exclusive mediatorship, unique revelations, salvation by grace rather than by development, and damnation at death for the large majority of the human race. Christian theologians are accepting the view of immanence with different degrees of completeness. Though Jesus was much hampered by his Jewish heritage, He yet had a fine faith in God as the indwelling presence in the world. "The kingdom of God is within you". With the Hindu, Jesus believes that the changes of the world are not the results of an occasional interference of God from outside, but are a regular divine progress. The central lesson of the life of Jesus to the Hindu is the undermining of the false antithesis between man and God. Jesus is the example of a man who has become God and none can say where His manhood ends and His divinity begins. Man and God are akin—"That art Thou". *Tat tvam asi*.

III

The doctrine of the immanence of God in life and history is inconsistent with the theory of unique revelations at particular epochs. Hinduism prefers to think of God's activity as immanent in the whole spiritual development of the race. It yet tickets off some prominent aspects of this continuous development, as indicating in a more striking manner the presence of God. Though divine life permeates, subdues and controls all life on earth, still the stages when the higher forms were evolved, when the better types were perfected, reveal more prominently the working of the immanent spirit. These stages are marked by the appearance of the subhuman *avatārs*. When man appears on the scene, the problem of morality arises and the continuous redemptive activity of God becomes more manifest when the moral order is sharply disturbed. The restoration of the moral equilibrium demands the appearance of some who embody greater goodness than usual.[6] These souls who support unflinchingly the cause of God, that is, goodness, reveal more than ordinary beings the eternal within the temporal, the grain within the husk. These manifestations of spiritual values may be viewed either as the revelation of God or the realisation of the potentialities of man, since these two are only different ways of stating one fact. We call them fresh revelations of the depths of God or decisive developments of the possibilities of man. Naturally, the pious view them as deliberate acts of God adopted in divine wisdom to serve His purpose. But the higher thought of India is emphatically of opinion that God is ever active and that love is His very essence and not a mere accidental aberration.

While all men reproduce or incarnate to some extent the nature of God, His truth, love and power, those who are called *avatārs* do so in a more striking way and to a greater degree. This is the case with Rama, Krishna and Buddha. Jesus is an *avatār* since His love for the sinful which came out most markedly in His appeal on the Cross, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do", is of a piece with God's love for His children. But that He had a special relation to God, which it is not possible for others to acquire, is a proposition which it is very

[6] See the *Bhagavadgītā*, IV. 7-8; see also Professor Hogg's *Redemption from the World.*

difficult to defend. Nor is there any authentic evidence of it, I venture to submit, in the synoptic Gospels. Stories, of course, there are, as about many others in the pre-Christian and the post-Christian eras, but on such a question they count for little. The adoptionist Christology and the Pre-existence theory involve an untenable antithesis between God and man, which is reminiscent of Jewish dualism. The life of Jesus will have no meaning for us, if He had any non-human elements which enabled him to reach perfection. Faith in the Fatherhood of God, compels us to assume that what was possible for Jesus is also possible for other men. The resources of God which were available to Him are open to us, and if we struggle and strive even as He did, we will develop the God in us. We are all partakers of God's nature and can incarnate God's love even as Jesus did, if we acquire Jesus' faith in God. At best Jesus is "the first born among many brethren."[7] The incarnation of God in Jesus is essentially one with the indwelling of God in the other saints of the world. The divine relationship revealed by Him is potentially present in all of us. It is a pious delusion to think that none else than Jesus attained this consciousness of spiritual oneness with God. The history of Hinduism gives several instances of souls who were saved, who had the experience of the oneness of "I and my Father", who saw with the eye of the soul the glory of God as it is in its own nature, not merely as momentary gleams breaking through the darkness of the sense world, and enjoyed Him for ever. The nearer the approach to God, the greater is the community of nature between man and

Romans VIII, 92.

God, and he who lives in God, not intermittently but constantly, can say: "I am He." The testimony of the *Ṛṣis* of the *Upaniṣads* is confirmed by Jesus and other religious geniuses of the world. Let us hear the Sufi martyr, Al Hallaj: "I am the Truth; I am He whom I love; and He whom I love is I. We are two souls dwelling in one body. When thou seest me, thou seest Him; and when thou seest Him, thou seest me." In that condition of at-one-ment, there is no opposition between the human soul and divine. According to Jami: " 'I', and 'Thou' have here no place, and are but phantasies vain and unreal."[8]

In our loyalty and devotion to Jesus, we may say that the revelation of God in Jesus is a perfect and complete one and His personality is unapproached in all history. The light of God, it is admitted sometimes with great reluctance, shone clearly no doubt in some prophetic souls, but it never blazed forth in such unique splendour as in Jesus. All this may be true, but we cannot legitimately object, if the followers, say, of Confucius and of Buddha, set up similar claims for their heroes. If it is argued that spiritual experience on a vast scale confirms the divinity and mediatorship of Jesus, similar experience is not wanting for the other great saviours of humanity. Hinduism believes that every *guru* is a Saviour, inasmuch as he quickens in his disciples the life of God and develops the seed of the spirit capable of fructifying in them. Any one who helps us to a complete harmonisation of the finite will of man with the perfect will of God has the power to save us. In some systems like that of the *Śaiva Siddhānta*, the *guru* is said to be the very God who appears out of the fulness of His grace to help man in the upward ascent. It cannot be contended that it is impossible to reach heaven unless it be through the mediatorship of Jesus. It is even admitted that Abraham got there, centuries before Jesus was born.[9]

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[8] Browne's *Literary History of Persia*, I, p. 439.

It is not easy to follow such a proposition as that all ideal qualities of perfect manhood for all time and all conditions were included in Jesus and that His revelation is final and all-inclusive. There is no finality with regard to any revelation on earth. God has never said His last word on any subject. He has always more things to tell us than we now can bear.[10]

A more critical attitude towards the divinity of Jesus is growing among the Christian theologians of the West, who are tending to emphasize more and more His humanity. The claims to omniscience and the consciousness of having created the universe are not seriously pressed. On the other hand, more attention is paid to the statements that He "grew in wisdom", "learned obedience by the things which he suffered", was made "perfect through sufferings", and "hath been in all points tempted as we are". The travail of the spirit in the wilderness makes Him our brother. He, like us, felt in the presence of God that lowly reverence and humility which made Him say: "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but One, that is, God." "My father is greater than I."[11] Miracles are not adduced as evidence of His divinity. Science is critical of many of them. Psycho-therapy is able to explain a few. Jesus Himself never deigned to perform miracles to prove His divinity. On the other hand, He admits that others also are able to do them. "If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out?"[12] Jesus' own testimony, philosophical truth, and religious experience alike demand that He should be brought into line with the other great saints of God, who has not left Himself without a witness in any clime or age.

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[9] Luke XVI, 24.

[10] John XVI, 12.

[11] Mark X, 18; John XIV, 28.

IV

Man is made in the image of God and so is not naturally depraved. As we now find him, he is, no doubt, handicapped in several ways. These defects are foreign to his true nature and are the result of his abuse of freedom. The Hebrew story :

> Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
> Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
> Brought death into the world and all our woe

endorses the Hindu view that sorrow and suffering, consequent on sin and stupidity, are produced by man, though God allowed them when He gave us freedom. God, as we saw, does not deal with us as a potter with clay, but gave us full freedom to realise our destiny. But man loved his false self and not his true self and source, *viz.*, God, and thus evil arose. Our sinfulness, however, does not destroy the immortal glory that is our heritage, though it postpones its arrival.

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[12] Luke XI, 19.

The doctrine of the natural depravity of man, I fear, cannot be sustained. The divine is our nature. The light of God lighteth every man who cometh into the world. "Thou wouldst not be seeking me if thou didst not possess me." Goethe says:

> Were not the eye itself a Sun
> No Sun for it could ever shine;
> By nothing Godlike could the heart be won
> Were not the heart itself divine.

On this view, conversion is not the birth of anything new, though it is the sudden reversal of the former course of life. Salvation is more a gradual development of the divine in us than a gift due to the grace of God. Modern psychological analysis of the act of redemption makes it clear to us that God acts in the development of the individual soul more from within than from without. Grace and development are two aspects of one process, though the former suggests something like a spiritual miracle or crisis, and the latter implies the continuity of man and God.

The course of discipline which the individual is called upon to undergo, if he is to realise his divine inheritance, may be distinguished into three types, answering to the three aspects of conscious life. In the period of the *Upaniṣads*, God was regarded primarily as Eternal Truth or Light and the individual was asked to comprehend the nature of God by *śraddhā* or faith and *jnāna* or wisdom. When we pass to the *Bhagavadgītā*, it is the aspect of God as love that becomes more prominent and *bhakti* or devotion to God becomes the chief means of salvation. With the Buddhists and the *Śaivites*, as with the ancient Hebrews, God is the Eternal Righteousness, and *tapas* or austere simplicity of life and self-sacrifice become emphasised. Any one of these three methods *jnāna*, *bhakti* or *tapas* has the power to transform our life as a whole.

When we undergo this inward renewal of mind, heart and will, when we give up our self-regarding life, we find a self which beats in unison with the impersonal and the universal good. This is "to be saved". The secret of salvation is not a change of creed but an inward renewal. The kingdom of God is an attitude of the soul. Salvation is a qualitative change which fills the life of man with the spirit of God. What the exact nature of it is, cannot be translated into our terms, coined as they are in the mint of human experience. The glory that shall be, we cannot know fully. If we insist on interpreting the nature of eternal life in the language of logic and time, we have to say that it is an identification of the will of the soul with that of God, or more concretely, it is citizenship in the kingdom of God or *Brahmaloka*, from which there is no possibility of degradation into the world of *samsāra*. Sankara declares the impossibility of characterising: the supreme experience of oneness with God and allows, if any logical description is demanded, that it is best to say that that life is dwelling in the city of God. Ramanuja, however, believes that nothing higher is conceivable or real.

The ascended Christ says: "I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God and he shall go no more out."[13] The expression that '*he shall go no more out*' has a family likeness to the Hindu view that the saved soul does not return to the struggle of *samsāra*. *Napunaravrittih*. Both the Hindu and the Christian view agree with regard to the features of the free soul. Wisdom, love and joy are the fruits of salvation. The saved soul has that perfect confidence in the goodness of things that it is not tossed about by the winds of doctrine and dogma It has that true love or inward brotherliness, which is not mere refraining from injury or forgiveness of enemies, but positive service of humanity. No great religious leader has failed to pay his homage to the principle of love. Ahimsā is a central feature of the *Upaniṣads.* Buddha asks us to do good to them that hate us. In the Book of Exodus, we read: "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him." The forty-fifth chapter of Genesis gives us an idea of the admiration which the ancients had for a magnanimous man. See the superb scene in which Joseph forgives his brethren. Paul quotes from the Book of Proverbs, when he writes to the Romans: "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink." Of Jesus, it is written: "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered, threatened not."[14] The saved soul has not only wisdom and love but also that real joy which is not at the mercy of men and circumstances, the peace or *santi* of which the Hindus speak. It is the joy to which Jesus referred when he said: "My joy I give unto you, and your joy no man taketh from you."

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[13] Revelation III. 12.

Apparently there is not much . serious difference between Hinduism and Christianity on the question of the nature and means of salvation, if we do not take into account the doctrine of Atonement, that "God was in

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[14] Peter II, 23.

Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." That Jesus helps us to turn away from sin and toward God, as every saint, in some degree, does, is beyond question. But the sacrifice of Christ has no significance for man as a propitiation for sin. Jesus is our Saviour, since He gives us evidence in His life of the love of God, which will bear us in all crises and catastrophes. He gives us assurance that it is possible for us to conquer the world, the flesh and the devil and attain perfection. Ritschl rightly contends: "All that we can recognise as the real truth of His existence, is that through the impulse and direction we receive from Him it is possible for us to enter into His relation to God and the world."[15]

V

The doctrines of *karma* and re-birth, which distinguish the faith of the Hindus, do not evidently commend themselves to the majority of Christian thinkers who, I am afraid, are mostly misled by misrepresentations. *Moksha* or at-one-ment with God is not possible as long as the individual clings to his separate narrow individuality. Until all traces of this separatist tendency are suppressed, union with the Supreme cannot be realised. We are committed to the world of *samsāra*, the endless cycle of lives, until we conquer time and reach perfection. This view is not so fantastic, as it is generally said to be. If life eternal (*moksha*), means a state which transcends temporal conditions (*samsāra*), then so long as we cling to the latter, *viz.*, time, the former, *viz.*, eternity, cannot be attained. Unless we drop the individual point of view and raise ourselves to the universal, we cannot lay hold on the truth. All our efforts to reach the universal standpoint, while retaining the individual, are doomed to disappointment. Moral growth is of this character. It has for its basis the exclusive individual with separate plans, purposes and preferences, confronted by others with similar interests. Through moral effort the individual can approximate to the goal, but never reach it. *Samsāra* is the world of individualistic moralism which has for its principle perpetual progress or endless growth and not effective realisation of complete fruition. Kant's ethics gives us an instructive analogy. The imperative of the moral law demands a total suppression of the sensitive part of man's nature. This end is not realised in our present experience, and so he offers us an infinite future to realise it, but Kant forgets that infinite time is inadequate for an impossible task. *Finite* agents cannot achieve *infinite* perfection, even if they groan and travail to the end of time. Kant prescribes a self-contradictory task. The way out is to knock down the sense of the finite. Only then can we be saved from the unending progress of the finite, which yields no satisfaction. Unless we abandon the standpoint of *samsāra* by cutting through the chain and lift ourselves up above sensitivity, above space-time, above individuality, there is no release possible. Life eternal can be lived here and now, if only we discard the separatist viewpoint of mere moralism and rise to the religious level.

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[15] *Justification and Reconciliation*, p. 387

In the world of *samsāra*, the law of *karma* holds. It is the principle of moral continuity by which all steps on the upward path which we gain through toil and suffering are secured for us, and the character we build conserved, so that we need not re-traverse old steps, but always look upwards and onwards. According to the doctrine of *karma*, every man will have chances opened to him, until he realises the destiny for which he is intended. If God is love, none can be lost for ever. The redemptive work of God does not cease, until the purpose of God is fulfilled with regard to every being. The sin of man hides but does not destroy his immortal destiny. God's love would not allow even the worst sinner to slip away from Him completely. If death were the end, God's purpose in creating us would be frustrated; for most of us die unrepentant and in sin. If we do not admit the defeat of God's purpose, which would be a very serious limitation of God's nature, then there must be scope for growth after death for all souls to develop and manifest the God in them. This view seems to be much more consistent with the justice and love of God than the one prevailing in Christendom, which has adopted a hell for the large majority of mankind. A deeper realization of the truth of God as love will lead Christian thinkers to admit development after death.

If God destroys his delinquent children, then we are attributing to God a very primitive instinct which even civilised men have sublimated. If Jesus took little children on His knees and told His hearers that the only way of pleasing God was to become themselves like little children, it is atrocious for us to thrust these citizens of the kingdom of heaven into the fire of hell.

According to St. Paul, "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together . . . . waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God". If any souls are doomed for ever without a chance of manifesting themselves as sons of God, then God's ideal consummation for the world has broken down. The doctrine of divine immanence requires us to believe that no man deserves to be thrown into eternal hell. However far he may go astray, he is not a lost soul. None can shake off the divinity in him, however much he may hide it by his sin, stupidity and selfishness. The unsupported finite, the individual who is not rooted in the eternal, in other words, the man who is not made by God is the only rubbish fit to be cast into hell-fire, but not he who bears the human face divine. He may sin grossly in the life, but his immortal destiny cannot be destroyed. Beneath the horrible mask of a Judas, there is the potentially divine face of a Jesus. St. Paul says: "A veil lieth upon their heart. But whensoever a man shall turn unto the Lord, the veil shall be taken away." Mark the words '*whensoever a man shall turn unto the Lord*,' that is, at any time in the history of the individual, in this world or in the world to come, if he repents he has a chance. To the Hindu, the case of Dives seems to be the height of tragedy.[16] In a repentant mood he begs for a small favour, and that not for himself, and no God cares to listen to his prayer. For there is no escape possible for a soul undergoing torments in hell. Once dead, the fate of man seems to be settled eternally. Assuming that God is not love but stern justice with fierce indignation against wrong, the treatment of Dives is not even just. Errors unrepented of in this life cannot be punished through all the ages. But even the Old Testament gets over the conception of God as mere justice. Some of the Prophets and Psalmists had a more adequate view. "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy."[17] With such a God who is ready to forgive and welcome back the sinner, Dives has a chance. How much more has he with Jesus' God, who is not only the Father who waits at home to receive the prodigal, but also the Shepherd who searches in the mountains for the lost sheep? If God goes out to seek the sinner and bring him back, the repentance of Dives will be a matter of rejoicing to Him. If God is unimaginably good "exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think", is this hope of a future, where souls like Dives could develop in their new mood, too good to be true? "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven, give good things to those that ask Him!"[18] If we never can forgive as much as we have been forgiven, then is it right to think that God will not refrain from vengeance? God's illimitable love is the guarantee there is a boundless future opening before us.

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[16] Luke XVI,- 3119.

Except for the proposition that God is not the God of the dead but of the living, Jesus did not give any definite account of the future life. His references to it in the parables of the Sheep and the Goats, Dives and Lazarus, are coloured by the beliefs of the age in heaven and hell, as geographical areas, full of blessedness and misery, and they are not relevant to the problem. Jesus evidently did not believe in a long interval between death and judgment, for the rich glutton and Lazarus had their punishment and reward almost immediately after death. Jesus was not misleading the repentant thief when He said: "*Today* shalt thou be with me in paradise."[19] The official view that the dead will rise with their physical bodies for judgment after death is not supported by these statements of Jesus. On the orthodox view, it is difficult to know how it fares with the countless dead, in the interval between death and judgment. The only interpretation of heaven and hell consistent with the teaching and character of Jesus is that they refer to qualitative changes in the souls. Heaven symbolises the improvement of the soul and hell its opposite. And there are grades in hell, as well as in heaven, many mansions in God's Kingdom, and each man will go to his place in accordance with the strength of his faith and the merit of his life. This is the way in which God's justice operates, as the law of Karma tells us. As a man uses his chance, so will his progress be, and the kind and extent of his use will determine his grade of development. That Jesus had a clear consciousness of the law of spiritual continuity comes out in many of his utterances. He is aware that on the day of judgment, men shall give account for every idle word which they speak. All our nameless acts of tenderness and love —"I was an hungered and ye gave me meal"—are quite effective in their results.

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[17] Psalms CIII, 8.

[18] Matthew VII, II.

This view is in accord with the known facts of the development of human personality. The advance in holiness or perfection is a gradual moral process which cannot be achieved instan aneously. In normal circumstances self-development is a continuous process, with no conceivable limits. Growth is the law of personality, and for it both time and opportunity are necessary. The law of Karma opens up a vast vista where there will be ample scope for self-development.

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[19] Luke XVIII, 1, 43

This principle rightly insists that our conduct as a whole determines our future. A single incident like baptism does not decide the fate of the individual. The infant which dies soon after baptism and the one without it will both have practically the same future careers, other things remaining equal. Jesus would certainly be shocked to hear, that, according to his message of love, the penalty for error of belief, or accident of birth in another religion or the misfortune of missing some magical sacrament, is continuous burning in hell-fire. It is the spiritual growth that a man has made or failed to make that determines his future destiny.

The law of *Karma* is criticised as being too mechanical and inconsistent with Divine love. The conception of God as an unfettered despot, who interferes whenever it pleases Him to make certian people sinful and others saintly, is repugnant to Hindu thought. To argue that God's love is not bound by the law of character is to support the Calvinistic theology of arbitrary and irrational decrees, according to which the elect shall be saved, do what they will, and the reprobate shall be damned, do what they can. It is impossible for God to ignore the conduct of men, though His love is so infinite that it supports all who make a start in the right direction. The necessities of the spiritual world demand that repentance should be followed by the forgiveness of sins and that utter self surrender shall be followed by the grace of God. The moral law is the very being of God, and it demands that the experiences to which we shall be subjected shall vary with the moral quality of our deeds. The constancy of God is not opposed to the love of God. The theory of divine immanence tells us that God's judgment does not come from anything external. It works from within. We raise or degrade ourselves by our acts. There is no escape from the law of God, which is closer to us than hands and feet, and is in fact the essence of us all. The law of Karma tells us that those who violate God's laws must suffer for their violation, though there is possibility of repentance and improvement at every stage.

Those who argue that the Hindu doctrine of Karma is mechanical because the absoluteness of the law demands that the full debt must be paid, uphold, rather strangely, a worse proposition that it must be paid somehow by somebody, if not by the sinner. That one man should suffer for another's sins is intelligible, whatever be its validity. But does not the situation become paradoxical, if not grotesque, when the sinner complacently accepts that another should suffer for his sin? The view deludes the unthinking into the false notion they might continue their careers of crime, for God would some day send some angel or Son of His to bear the sin of the world. The way in which orthodox Christian doctrine regards the suffering and death of Jesus, the guiltless victim, is conceivable, only if God were a well-made weighing machine. According to the Hindu view love of God and effort on the part of man are both necessary for moral growth.

It is well known that the theory of *Karma* is set forth as an explanation for human inequality. Experience shows that all men are not equally favoured in inward disposition or outward circumstances. Heredity and environment contribute materially to the shaping of human souls. If we believe, as Calvin assuredly did, that the world is governed by a loving and intelligent being, we must admit that the diversities of life are not due to accident. Thus far the Hindu can follow the argument; but when Calvin suggests as a solution the theory of election, that the capricious will of God is responsible for the choice of some for salvation and others for perdition, the Hindu hesitates to follow his lead and asks whether there is not a more reasonable alternative. There is no need to adopt such a mechanical view of the relation of God to man. The law of *Karma* traces this diversity of endowment to the ordered will of God. The Hindu is not prepared to introduce into the nature of God an element of utter irrationality. He believes that one increasing purpose manifests itself in the evolution of the universe, and if some beome more readily the channels of divine grace than others, it is because they struggled a good deal to earn it in the past. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," says St. Paul. The law of *Karma* accepts this principle and extends it further and says: "Whatsoever a man reaps, that he must have sown." Jesus, to my mind, understood this further implication. When he told the paralytic: "Courage, my son, your sins are forgiven," he meant to convey that his suffering was the result of his past sins. The sinner may have forgotten them, but not God. The effects of his sins were lying in the depths of his personality. As modern psychology would say, our past deeds are stored up in the region of unconscious. Jesus assumes something like the law of

Karma, when he tells the sick man: "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.' (St. John V, 14.) Suffering is not the arbitrary fiat of a judge who inflicts it on us, though we do not deserve it. Suffering forced on us against our will is the wages of sin. We cannot esteem it a privilege and an honour. In that case, those suffering hell have no reason to be ashamed of themselves. Jesus recognised the value of suffering as a warning against evil and an incentive to good.

All this does not apply to suffering voluntarily undertaken. Suffering is for purification until we realise life eternal. When we are perfected we become sharers in the work of God, which is the creation and maintenance of absolute values. Thereafter, all 'suffering' is self-imposed though it is quite distinct in its character from ordinary suffering. Śiva drank poison for the redemption of mankind. Buddha, according to the *Mahāyāna* faith, refused to attain *nirvāna* for the sake of man. In addition to the suffering inflicted on mortals as a punishment for their past sins and the 'suffering' seeming such, undertaken by the free souls of the world, there is a third variety which is called *tapas* in Hindu thought. *Tapas* is the suffering voluntarily undertaken by those who are still on the path to perfection, for the sake of self-development or world-welfare. This is a very difficult undertaking and some of the greatest souls of the world have quailed before it. Witness the scene at Gethsemane. To realise our destiny, the most efficient method is this suffering for the world. Śiva the prince of ascetics, or God as Righteousness, expects of His devotees austere asceticism and self-sacrifice, even as Brahmā demands meditation and Viṣnu devotion. Suffering for the world out of love is the price which every son of man has to pay, if he is to be redeemed from evil and manifest himself as a son of God. The Cross is not an offence or a stumbling-block to the Hindu, but is the great symbol of the redemptive reality of God. It shows how love is rooted in self-sacrifice. The story of Hinduism has many instances of *Ṛṣis* and Buddhas who have sanctified *tapas* and suffered more than they deserved for the sake of the world. This avoidable suffering is not the result of past sins.

Christian thinkers have felt for long uneasy about the doctrine of perpetual torment and devised various schemes which would allow scope for future development. The Council of Florence in 1429 formulated the doctrine of purgatory which is neither hell nor heaven. Dean Farrar suggested an intermediate state of probation in which souls would have an opportunity for repentance. Some theologians take their stand on the vague statements of Peter III, 19; IV, 6, and argue for an intermediate state between death and judgment. While many plead for continuity between this life and the next, only very few are willing to advocate pre-existence. In course of time, however, Western thinkers will be led to discern the elements of value in the Hindu view, which is today confused with a good deal of grotesque mythology which no thinking Hindu accepts as literal truth.

VI

Indian Christians who breathe the same spiritual air laden with the fragrance of India's past as their Hindu brethren are deeply imbued with the doctrine of divine immanence

It is becoming increasingly difficult for them to accept the apocalyptic view of the sternness of God and His supernaturalism which threatens disobedience to God's will with tremendously terrific judgments, and which looks upon Jesus as the very God of God sent to the world to be crucified as an atonement for the sins of mankind; and contemplates the renewal on a vast scale of the miracle of the resurrection, the coming of Christ in glory on a world which has rejected Him The thoughtful among the younger generation of Indian Christians, believe that God works in all men and in the whole world, though Jesus so perfected His nature that He manifested the God in him in a more marked degree than other men. They, of course, think that the life of Jesus which brought out the aspect of redeeming love in the nature of God, which was practically ignored by the Old Testament writers, though some of their great prophets like Isaiah were not unaware of it, has the highest ethical significance for us in the present condition of the world. They confidently anticipate the coming of the kingdom of God by the gradual growth of goodness and spread of Christian love though not of Christian doctrine. They are deeply concerned when such vital doctrines of Hinduism as the unity and omnipenetrativeness of God. *Ahimsā*, *karma* and rebirth are misrepresented and caricatured by the non-Indian members of their fold, who have no idea of the evil effects of the relaxing of traditional restraints. Christianity in India today hears the call of Hinduism. She may pay heed to it and follow or she may be deaf to it and refrain. But all signs indicate that she is choosing wisely. She is attempting to combine the best elements of Hinduism with the good points of Christianity, and if she succeeds, it is not India alone that will be the gainer by this Hindu Christianity. The spiritual life of the world will increase.

Buddha and His Religion

SIXTH century B.C. was remarkable for the spiritual unrest and intellectual ferment in many countries. In China we had Lao Tzu and Confucius, in Greece Parmenides and Empedocles, in Iran Zarathustra, in Israel the Prophets, in India Mahāvīra and the Buddha. In that period many remarkable teachers worked upon their inheritance and developed new points of view.

The Pūrṇimā or full-moon day of the month of Vaiśākha is connected with three important events in the life of the Buddha—birth, enlightenment and parinirvāṇa. It is the most sacred day in the Buddhist calendar. The main events of the Buddha's life are well known. He was the son of a minor ruler of Kapilavastu, grew up in luxury, married Yośodharā, had a son, Rāhula, and led a sheltered life where the world's miseries were hidden. On four occasions when he went out of his palace, so the legend tells us, he met an old man and felt that he was subject to the frailties of age; met a sick man and felt that he was liable to sickness; met a cropse and felt that he was also subject to death; and met an ascetic with a peaceful countenance who had adopted the traditional way of the seekers of religious truth. The Buddha resolved to gain freedom from old age, sickness and death by following his example. The mendicant tells the Buddha:

> *nara-puṇgava janma-mṛtyu bhītaḥ śramdṇah provrajito' smi mokṣa-hetoḥ.*[1]

I am a śramaṇa, an ascetic, who in fear of birth and death have left home-life to gain liberation.

The sight of the holy man, healthy in body, cheerful in mind, without any of the comforts of life, impressed the Buddha strongly 'with the conviction that the pursuit of religion was the only goal worthy of man. It makes man independent of the temporary trials and fleeting pleasures of the world. The Buddha decided to renounce the world and devote himself to a religious life. He left his home, wife and child, put on the garb and habits of a mendicant, and fled into the forest in order to meditate on human suffering, its causes and the means by which it could be overcome. He spent six years in the study of the most abstruse doctrines of religion, suffered the severest austerities, reduced himself to the verge of starvation in the hope that, by mortifying the flesh, he would surely attain to the knowledge of truth. But he came very near death without having attained the wisdom that he sought. He gave up ascetic practices, resumed normal life, refreshed himself in the waters of the river Nairañjanā, accepted the milk pudding offered by Sujātā: *nāyam ātmā balahīnena labhyah*. After he gained bodily health and mental vigour he spent seven weeks under the shade of the Bodhi tree, sitting in a state of the deepest and most profound meditation. One night towards the dawn his understanding opened and he attained enlightenment. After the enlightenment the Buddha refers to himself in the third person as the Tathāgata: he who has arrived at the truth. He wished to preach the knowledge he gained and so said: "I shall go to Banaras where I will light the lamp that will bring light unto the world. I will go to Banaras and beat the drums that will awaken mankind. I shall go to Banaras and there I shall teach the Law. 'Give ear, O mendicants! The Deathless (*amṛta*, eternal life) has been found by me. I will now instruct. I will preach the Dharma'." He travelled from place to place, touched the lives of hundreds, high and low, princes and peasants. They all came under the spell of his great personality, He taught for forty-five years the beauty of charity and the joy of renunciation, the need for simplicity and equality.

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[1] Aśvaghoṣa: *Buddhacarita*, V. 17

At the age of eighty he was on his way to Kuśinagara, the town in which he passed into parinirvāṇa. Taking leave of the pleasant city of Vaiśālī with his favourite disciple, Ānanda, he rested on one of the neighbouring hills and looking at the pleasant scenery with its many shrines and sanctuaries, he said to Ānanda; *citram jambūdvīpam, manoramam jīvitam manuṣyāṇām.* "Colourful and rich is India, lovable and charming is the life of men." On the banks of the river Hiraṇyavatī in a grove of sāla trees, the Buddha had a bed prepared for himself between two trees. He gently consoled his disciple, Ānanda, who was lamenting bitterly; "Do not weep, do not despair, Ānanda. From all that he loves man must part. How could it be that what is born, what is subject to instability should not pass ? Maybe, you were thinking, 'We have no longer a master.' That must not be, O Ānanda. The doctrine I have preached to you is your master.'' He repeated:

handa dāni bhikhave āmantayāmi vo
vayadhammā sankhārā, appamādena sampādetha'ti

"Verily, I say unto you now, O monks: All things are perishable; work out your deliverance with earnestness.''

These were his last words. His spirit sank into the depths of mystic absorption and when he had attained to that degree where all thought, all conception disappears, when the consciousness of individuality ceases, he entered into the supreme nirvāṇa.

II

In the life of the Buddha, there are two sides, individual and social, The familiar Buddha-image is of a meditating sage, yogin, absorbed and withdrawn, lost in the joy of his inner meditation. This is the tradition associated with Theravāda Buddhism and Aśoka's missions. For these the Buddha is a man, not God, a teacher and not a saviour. There is the other side of the Buddha's life, when he is concerned with the sorrows of men, eager to enter their lives, heal their troubles and spread his message for the good of the many: *bahu-jana-sukhāya bahu-jana hitāya.* Based on this compassion for humanity, a second tradition matured in North India under the Kuṣāṇas (70-480 A.D.) and the Guptas (320-650 A.D.) It developed the ideal of salvation for all, the discipline of devotion and the way of universal service. While the former tradition prevails in Ceylon, Burma and Thailand, the latter is found in Nepal, Tibet, Korea, China and Japan.

All forms of Buddhism, however, agree that the Buddha was the founder, that he strove and attained transcendental wisdom as he sat under the Bodhi tree, that he pointed a way from the world of suffering to a beyond, the undying, and those who follow the path for liberation may also cross to the wisdom beyond. This is the root of the matter, the essential unity underlying the many differences in outlook and expression that came to characterize Buddhism as it spread from India to other parts of the world.

The essence of all religion is a change in man's nature. The conception of second birth, *dvitīyam janma*, is the central teaching of the Hindu and Buddhist religions. Man is not one but a multiplicity. He is asleep, he is an automation. He is inwardly discordant. He must wake up, become united, harmonious within himself and free. The Greek mysteries implied this change in our nature. Man himself is conceived as a grain which could die as a grain but be reborn as a plant different from the grain. A bushel of wheat has two possible destinies, to be pounded and made into flour and become bread; or to be sown in the ground, to germinate and become a plant, and give a hundred grains for one that is sown. St. Paul borrowed this idea in describing the Resurrection when he says: "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die." "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." The change is a transformation of the substance itself. Man is not a complete, final being. He is a being who can transform himself, who can be born again. To effect this change, to be reborn, to be awakened is the goal of all religions as of Buddhism.

Our subjection to time, to *saṃsāra*, is due to *avidyā*, unawareness, leading to infatuation, depravity, *āsava*. Ignorance and craving are the substratum of the empirical life. From *avidyā* we must rise to *vidyā*, *bodhi*, enlightenment. When we have *vipassanā*, knowledge by seeing, clear preception, we will acquire *samatā*, unshakable calm. In all this, the Buddha adopts the Vedic criterion of certainty which is rooted in actual knowledge which is attained by immediate experience, direct intellectual intuition of reality: *yathā-bhūta-ñānadassana.*

III

The Buddha did not feel that he was announcing a new religion. He was born, grew up, and died a Hindu. He was restating with a new emphasis the ancient ideals of the Indo-Aryan civilization. "Even so have I, monks, seen an ancient way, an ancient road followed by the wholly awakened ones of olden times......Along that have I gone, and the matters that I have come to know fully as I was going along it, I have told to the monks, nuns, men and women lay-followers, even monks, this Brahma-faring, *brahma-cariya* that is prosperous and flourishing, widespread and widely known, become popular—in short, well made manifest for gods and men."[2]

The quest of religious India has been for the incomparable safetys, fearlessness *abhaya*, *mokṣa*, nirvāṇa. It is natural for man to strive to elevate himself above earthly things, to go out from the world of sense, to free his soul from the trammels of existence and gross materiality, to break through the outer darkness into the world of light and spirit. The Buddha aims at a new spiritual existence attained through *jñāna* or *bodhi*, absolute illumination. "But I deem the highest goal of a man to be the stage in which there is neither old age, nor fear, nor disease, nor birth, nor death, nor anxieties and in which there is no continuous renewal of activity."

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[2] *Saṁyutta Nikāya*

pade tu yasmin na jarā na bhīr na ruṅ na janma naivo-
paramo na cādhayaḥ
tam eva manye puruṣārtham uttamam na vidyate yatra
punaḥ punaḥ kriyā.[3]

The Buddha aimed at a spiritual experience in which all selfish craving is extinct and with it every fear and passion. It is a state of perfect inward peace, accompanied by the conviction of having attained spiritual freedom, a state which words cannot describe. Only he who has experienced it knows what it is. The state is not life in paradise where the gods dwell. "You should feel shame and indignation, if ascetics of other schools ask you if it is in order to arise in a divine world that ascetic life is practised under the ascetic Gautama." Even as the *Upaniṣads* distinguish *mokṣa* from life in *brahmaloka*, the Buddha points out that the gods belong to the world of manifestation and cannot therefore the called absolutely unconditioned. Existence has its correlative non-existence. The really unconditioned is beyond both existence and non-existence. The state of the *mukta*, the Buddha, is higher than that of Brahmā. It is invisible, resplendent and eternal. There is a higher than the gods, a transcendental Absolute described in the *Udāna* as *ajāta*, unborn, *abhūta*, unbecome, *akata*, unmade, *asankhata*, uncompounded. This is the Brahman of the *Upaniṣads* which is characterized as *na iti, na iti.*[4] The Buddha calls himself *brahmabhūta*, he who has become Brahman. The Buddha adopted an absolutist veiw of Ultimate Reality though not a theistic one. He felt that many abstained from action in the faith that God would do everything for them. They seemed to forget that spiritual realization is a growth from within. When the educated indulged in vain speculations about the Inexpressible, the uneducated treated God as a being who could be manipulated by magic rites or sorcery. If God forgives us anyway, it makes little difference how we live. The Buddha revolted against the ignorance and superstition, the dread and the horror, which accompanied popular religion. Besides, theistic views generally fill men's minds with dogmatism and their hearts with intolerance. Doctrinal orthodoxy has filled the world with unhappiness, injustice, strife, crime, and hatred.

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[3] Aṣvaghoṣa: *Buddhacarita*, XI, 59

The conception of the world as *saṁsāra*, a stream without end, where the law of *karma* functions, is common to all Indian systems, Hindu, Jain, Buddhist and Sikh. Nothing is permanent, not even the gods. Even death is not permanent, for it must turn to new life. The conduct of the individual in one life cannot determine his everlasting destiny. The Buddha does not accept a fatalistic view. He does not say that man has no control over his future. He can work out his future, become an *arhat*, attain nirvāṇa. The Buddha was an ardent exponent of the strenuous life. Our aim is to conquer time, overcome *saṁsāra* and the way to it is the moral path which results in illumination.

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[4] Cf. also: 'From which the words turn back together with the mind, not having attained.'—*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 11, 4. In the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* it is said: 'Before the gods sprang into existence, I was.' 11, 8, 8

The Buddha did not concede the reality of an unchangeable self, for the self is something that can be built up by good thoughts and deeds, but yet he has to assume it. While *karma* relates to the world of objects, of existence, in time, nirvāṇa assumes the freedom of the subject, of inwardness. We can stand out of our existential limits. We experience the nothingness, the void of the world to get beyond it. To stand out of objective existence there must come upon the individual a sense of crucifixion, a sense of agonizing annihilation, a sense of the bitter nothingness of all the empirical existence which is subject to the law of change, of death: *maraṇāntaṁ hi jīvitam*. We cry from the depths of unyielding despair: *mṛtyor mā amṛtam gamaya*. Who shall save me from the body of this death? If death is not all, if nothingness is not all, there is something which survives death, though it cannot be described. The 'I' is the unconditioned, something which has nothing to do with the body, feeling, perception, formations, thought, which are all impermanent, changeable, non-substantial. When the individual knows that what is impermanent is painful, he becomes detached from them and becomes free. The indispensable prerequisite of this is a higher consciousness of an 'I' or something like it: *attena vā attanīyena*.[5] This 'I' is the primordial essential self, the unconditioned, whose realization gives us liberty and power. The self is not body, feeling, consciousness, etc. But from this it does not follow that there is no self at all. The ego is not the only content of the self, though it is the only content that can be known objectively. There is another side to our self which helps us to attain nirvāṇa. The two selves are contrasted when the one is said to reproach the other; *attāpi attānam upavadati*. When the Buddha asks us to be diligent, to strive for salvation, he is referring to the inward principle which is not swept away by the current of events, which is not controlled by outward circumstances, which protects itself from the usurpations of society, which does not submit to human opinion but jealously guards its rights. The enlightened is free, having broken all bonds. The ascetic is one who has gained mastery over himself, "who has his heart in his power, and is not himself in the power of his heart".[6] The Buddha when he attained nirvāṇa is far from being dissolved into non-being. It is not he that becomes extinct but the passions and desires. He is no longer conditioned by the erroneous notions and selfish desires that normally go on shaping individuals. The Buddha realizes himself to be free from the characteristics that constitute an individual subject. He has vanished from the sphere of dualities. "Whatever thought he does not desire, that thought will he not think."[7]

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[5] *Majjhima Nikāya*, XXIX

The Buddha taught us to pursue *prajñā* and practise compassion, *karuṇā*. We will be judged not by the creeds we profess or the labels we wear or the slogans we shout but by our sacrificial work and brotherly outlook.[8] Man, weak as he is, subject to old age, sickness and death, in his ignorance and pride condemns the sick, the aged and the dead. If anyone looks with disgust on any fellow-being who is sick or old or dead, he would be unjust to himself. We must not find fault with the man who limps or stumbles along the road, for we do not know the shoes he wears or the burdens he bears. If we learn what pain is, we become the brothers of all who suffer.

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[6] *Ibid*, XXXII

[7] *Aṅguttara* IV,35; *Majjhima*, XX

IV

Buddhism did not start as a new and independent religion. It was an offshoot of the more ancient faith of the Hindus, perhaps a schism or a heresy. While the Buddha agreed with the faith he inherited on the fundamentals of metaphysics and ethics, he protested against certain practices which were in vogue at the time. He refused to acquiesce in the Vedic ceremonialism. When he was asked to perform some of these rites, he said: "And as for your saying that for the sake of Dharma I should carry out the sacrificial ceremonies which are customary in my family and which bring the desired fruit, I do not approve of sacrifices for I do not care for happiness which is sought at the price of others' suffering."[9]

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[8] Cf. *rudrākṣam, tulasī-kāṣṭham, tripuṇḍram, bhasma-dhāraṇam.*
yātrāḥ snānāni homāś ca, japā vā deva-darśanam,
na ete punanti manujam yathā bhūta hite-ratiḥ

[9] *Buddhacarita*, XI, 64

yadāttha cāpiṣṭaphalām kulocitām kuruṣva dharmāya makha-kriyām itinamo makhebhyo na hi kāmaye sukham parasyā dukha-kriyayā yad iṣyate.

It is true that the *Upaniṣads* also subordinate the sacrificial piety to the spiritual religion which they formulate, but they did not attack it in the way in which the Buddha did. The Buddha's main object was to bring about a reformation in the religious practices and a return to the basic principles. All those who adhere to the essential framework of the Hindu religion and attempt to bring it into conformity with the voice of awakened conscience are treated as *avatāras*. It is an accepted view of the Hindus that the Supreme as Viṣṇu assumed different forms to accomplish different purposes for the good of mankind. The Buddha was accepted as an *avatāra* who reclaimed Hindus from sanguinary rites and erroneous practices and purified their religion of the numerous abuses which had crept into it. This *avatāra* dotrine helps us to retain the faith of the ancestors while effecting reforms in it. Our *Purāṇas* describe the Buddha as the ninth *avatāra* of Viṣṇu.

In Jayadeva's *Aṣṭapadi* (of the *Gīta-govinda*) he refers to the different *avatāras* and mentions the Buddha as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, and gives the following account:

> O you of merciful heart denounced the Veda where the slaughter of cattle is taught. O Keśava, you, in the form of the Buddha, victory to you, Hari lord of the world.
>
> *nindasi yajñavidher ahaha śruti-jātam*
> *sadaya-hṛdaya, darśita paśu-ghātam*
> *keśava dhṛta-buddhaśarīra jaya jagadīśa hare.*[10]

The commentator writes:

> *yajñasya-vidhāna-bodhakam veda-samūham nindasi, na*

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[10] 1.9

tu sarvam ity arthaḥ.

The Buddha does not condemn the whole Sruti but only that part of it which enjoins sacrifices. Jayadeva sums up the ten *avatāras* in the next verse:

> Who upheld the Vedas, supported the universe, bore up the world, destroyed the demons, deceived Bali, broke the force of the Kṣaṭriyas, conquered Rāvaṇa, made the plough, spread mercy, prevailed over aliens, homage, O Kṛṣṇa, who took the ten forms.
>
> *vedān uddharate, jagan nivahate, bhūgolam udbibhrate,*
> *daityān dārayate,baliṁ chalayate, kṣatra-kṣayam kurvate,*
> *paulastyam jayate, halaṁ kalayate, kāruṇyam ātanvate,*
> *mlecchān mūrcchayate daśā-kṛti-kṛte kṛṣṇāya tubhyam namaḥ.*

The commentator writes:

> *kāruṇyam kṛpām ātanvate buddha-rūpeṇa vistārayate.*

The Buddha utilized the Hindu inheritance to correct some of its expressions. He came to fulfil, not to destroy. For us, in this country, the Buddha is an outstanding representative of our religious tradition. He left his footprints on the soil of India and his mark on the soul of the country with its habits and convictions. While the teaching of the Buddha assumed distinctive forms in the other countries of the world in conformity with their own traditions, here, in the home of the Buddha, it has entered into and become an integral part of our culture. The Brāhmaṇas and the Śramaṇas were treated alike by the Buddha and the two traditions gradually blended. In a sense the Buddha is a maker of modern Hinduism.

Occasionally humanity after an infinite number of gropings, creates itself, realizes the purposes of its existence in one great character and then again loses itself in the all too slow process of dissolution. Some of the practices associated with Buddhism are not quite consistent with the spirit of the Buddha. The Buddha aimed at the development of a new type of free man, free from prejudices, intent on working out his own future, with one's self as one's light, *atta-dīpa*.[11] His humanism crossed racial and national barriers. Yet the chaotic condition of world affairs reflects the chaos in men's souls. History has become universal in spirit. Its subject matter is neither Europe nor Asia, neither East nor West, but humanity in all lands and ages. In spite of political divisions, the world is one, whether we like it or not. The fortunes of everyone are linked up with those of others. But we are suffering from an exhaustion of spirit, an increase of egoism, individual and collective, which seem to make the ideal of a world society too difficult to desire. The enemy we have to fight is within ourselves. It is no use railing against God or Destiny, for we bring disgrace on ourselves. What we need today is a spiritual view of the universe for which this country, in spite of all its blunders and follies, has stood, which may blow through life again bursting the doors and flinging open the shutters of man's life. We must recover the lost ideal of spiritual freedom: *ātma-lābhān na paraṁ vidyate*. If we wish to achieve peace we must maintain that inner harmony, that poise of the soul, which are the essential elements of peace. We must possess ourselves though all else be lost. The free spirit sets no bounds to its love, recognizes in all human beings a spark of the Divine, and offers itself up a willing victim to the cause of mankind. It casts off all fear except that of wrong-doing, passes the bounds of time and death and finds inexhaustible power in life eternal.

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[11] *dīpa* is sometimes taken as *dvīpa*, island.

Mahavira and His Religion

THE period between 800 to 200 B.C. has been characterized as an axial period of history. In other words, the axis of world's thought shifted from a study of nature to a study of the life of man. In China, Lao Tse and Confucius; in India, the seers of the *Upaniṣads*, Mahāvīra and Gautama the Buddha; in Iran, Zoroaster; in Judea, the great prophets; and in Greece, the philosophers Pythagoras, Socrates and Plato: all of them turned their attention from outward nature to the study of the human self.

Mahāvīra is called the Jina, the conqueror. He did not conquer kingdoms: but he conquered his own self. He is called Mahāvīra, the great hero, not of the battles of the world but of the battles of the inward life. By a steady process of austerity, discipline, self-purification and understanding he raised himself to the position of a man who had attained divine status. His example is an incentive to others to pursue the same ideal of self-conquest.

India has from the beginning of its history down till today stood for this great ideal. When one looks at the symbols, the statues, and other relics which have come down to us from the time of Mohenjo-Dāro and Harappa down to our own day, we are reminded of the tradition that he who establishes the supremacy of spirit and its superiority to matter is the ideal man. This ideal has haunted the religious landscape of our country for four or five millennia.

The great statement by which the *Upaniṣads* are known to the world is *tat tvam asi*--that art thou. The potential divinity of the human soul is asserted thereby. We are called upon to understand that the soul is not to be confused with the body which can be broken, or the mind which can be moulded, but it is something which is superior to the relics of the body or the fluctuations of the mind-- something which each individual has, which is unseizable so to say, which cannot be merely objectified. The human being is not something thrown off, as it were in a cosmic whirl. As a spirit he is lifted above thenatural, and the social world. Unless we are able to realize the inwardness of the human self, the principle of subjectivity, we lose ourselves. Most of us are always lost in the pursuits of the world. We lose ourselves in the things of the world—health, wealth, possessions, houses, property—we let them possess us, we do not possess them. Such people are those who kill their own selves. They are called *ātmahano janāḥ*, so it is that in our country we have been asked to possess the soul.

Of all sciences the science of the self is the greatest. *adhyātmavidyā vidyānām*. The *Upaniṣad* tells us: *ātmānaṁ viddhi*, know thyself. Śaṁkara lays down as an essential condition of spiritual life, *ātma-anātma-vastu viveka:* the knowledge of the distinction between the soul and the non-soul. There is nothing higher in this world than the possession of one's soul. So it has been said to us by different writers that the true man is he who uses all the possessions of the world for the purpose of realizing the innate dignity of the soul. The *Upaniṣad* in a series of passages tells us that husband or wife or property—these are opportunities for the realization of one's own self: *ātmanastu kāmāya.* He who achieves through discipline, through a blameless life his highest status is a *paramātman*. He who achieves complete freedom is an *arhat*, free from all chances of rebirth or subjection to time.

In Mahāvīra we have an example of a man who renounced the things of the world, who was not entangled in the bonds of matter but who was able to realize the inward dignity of his own self. How can we pursue this ideal? What are the ways by which we can attain this self-possession? Our scriptures tell us, if we wish to know the self, *sravaṇa*, *manana*, *nididhyāsana* are to be practised. The *Bhagavadgītā* says: *tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā.* The same three great principles were asserted by Mahāvıra when he mentioned *darśana*, *jñāna*, *caritra.* We must have *viśvāsa*, faith, *srāddhā*, that there is something superior to the things of this world. Mere faith, blind unthinking faith, will not do. We must have knowledge, *manana*. By reflection we convert the product of faith into a product of enlightenment. But mere theoretical knowledge is not enough; *vākyārtha jñānamātreṇa na amṛtam*—we cannot get life eternal by mere textual learning. We must embody these great principles to our own life. *Caritra*, conduct is equally essential. We start with *darśana*, *praṇipāta* or *śravaṇa.*

We come to *jñāna, manana*, or *paripraśna*; then we come to *nididhyāsana, sevā* or *caritra*. As the Jain thinkers put it, these are essential.

What are the principles of *caritra*, or good conduct, *sadācaraṇa*? The Jain teachers ask us to undertake different vows. Every Jain has to take five vows: not to kill anything, not to lie, not to take what is not given, to preserve chastity and to renounce pleasure in external things. But the most important of them all is the vow of *ahiṁsā*, the vow of non-violence, of non-injury to living beings. Some even renounce agriculture for it tears up the soil and crushes insects. In this world it is not possible for us to abstain from violence altogether. As the *Mahābhārata* has it, *jīvo jīvasya jīvanam*—'Life is the food of life.'

What we are called upon to do is to increase the scope, so to say, of non-violence—*yatnāt alpatarā bhavet*. By our self-effort we must reduce the scope of force and increase the scope of persuasion. So *ahiṁsā* is the ideal which we have set before ourselves.

If we adopt that ideal we will get another consequence of it which is framed in the Jain doctrine of *anekāntavāda*. The Jains tell us that the absolute truth or *kevala-jñāna* is our ideal. But so far as we are concerned we know only part of the truth. *Vastu* is *anekadharmātmakam*; it has got many sides to it; it is complex; it has many qualities. People begin to realize this side of it or that side of it, but their views are partial, tentative, hypothetical. The complete truth is not to be found in these views. It is only realizable by the souls who have overcome their own passions. This fosters the spirit which makes us believe that what we think right may not, after all be right. It makes us aware of the uncertainties of human hypotheses. It makes us believe that our deepest convictions may be changeable and passing. The Jains use the fable of the six blind men dealing with the elephant. One takes hold of the ears and says it is a winnowing fan. Another embraces it and says it is a pillar. But each of them gives us only one partial aspect of the ultimate truth. The aspects are not to be regarded as opposed to each other. They are not related to each other as light is related to darkness; they are related to each other as the different colours of the spectrum are related to one another. They are not to be regarded as contradictories, they are to be taken merely as contraries. They are alternative readings of reality.

The world today is in the throes of a new birth. While we aim at one world, division rather than unity characterizes our age. In a two-world pattern there is a temptation for many of us to think that this is right and that is wrong and we must therefore repudiate the other. Well, these are to be regarded as alternatives, so to say, as varying aspects of one fundamental reality. Overemphasis on any one aspect of reality is analogous to the attitude of the blind men in the fable each of whom described the shape of the elephant according to the part of the animal he touched.

Individual freedom and social justice are both essential for human welfare. We may exaggerate the one or underestimate the other. But he who follows the Jain concept of *anekāntavāda*, *saptabhaṅgīnaya*, or *syādvāda*, will not adopt that kind of cultural regimentation. He will have the spirit to discriminate between the right and the wrong in his own and in the opposite views, and try to work for a greater synthesis. So the necessity for self-control, the practice of *ahiṁsā* and also tolerance and appreciation of others' point of view—these are some of the lessons which we can acquire from the great life of Mahāvīra.

Adi Granth and the Sikh Religion

THE *Ādi Granth*, which is regarded as the greatest work of Panjabi literature, is largely the work of Guru Arjun, the fifth of the ten Sikh Gurus. He brought together the writings of the first four gurus and those of the Hindu and Muslim saints from different parts of India. Guru Arjun's successors made a few additions and the tenth guru, Govind Singh, said that there would be no more gurus and the *Granth* should be regarded as the living voice of all the prophets, *guru vāṇi*. William Penn says: "There is something nearer to us than scriptures, to wit, the word in the heart from which all scriptures come." *Japji* says: *guramukhi nādam guramukhi vedam*. The word of the guru is the music which the seers hear in their moments of ecstasy: the word of the guru is the highest scripture. By communion with the Word we attain the vision unattainable. Guru Arjun says that the book is the abode of God: *pothi paramesvar ka thām*. The hymns are set to music.[1] We find in the *Ādi Granth* a wide range of mystical emotion, intimate expressions of the personal realization of God and rapturous hymns of divine love. The Sikh creed includes belief in the ten gurus and the *Ādi Granth*

A remarkable feature of the *Ādi Granth* is that it contains the writings of the religious teachers of Hinduism, Islam, etc. This is in consistency with the tradition of India which respects all religions and believes in the freedom of the human spirit. Indian spiritual tradition is not content with mere toleration. There can be no goodwill or fellowship when we only tolerate each other. Lessing in his *Nathan the Wise* rebuked the habit of condescending toleration. We must appreciate other faiths, recognize that they offer rich spiritual experiences and encourage sacrificial living and inspire their followers to a noble way of life. The Sikh gurus who compiled the *Ādi Granth* had this noble quality of appreciation of whatever was valuable in other religious traditions. The saints belong to the whole world. They are universal men,-who free our minds from bigotry and superstition, dogma and ritual and emphasize the central simplicities of religion. The great seers of the world are the guardians of the inner values who correct the fanaticism of their superstitious followers.

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[1] The *Ādi Granth* includes hymns by Farīd (twelfth century), Beni (twelfth century), Jayadeva (twelfth century), Sadhna (thirteenth century), Trilocana (b. 1267), Nāmdev (thirteenth century), Rāmānanda (1360-1450), Sain (1390-1440), Pipa (b. 1425), Kabīr (1440-1518), Rāmdās (fifteenth century), Dhanna (early sixteenth century) Bhikkan (d. 1573), Sūrdās (b. 1528), Paramānanda, a disciple of Rāmānanda.

II

The Hindu leaders neglected to teach the spiritual realities to the people at large who were sunk in superstition and materialism. Religion became confused with caste distinctions and taboos about eating and drinking. The Muslims were also victims of superstition and some of their leaders were afflicted with the disease of intolerance.[2] Saints arose in different parts of the country, intent on correcting the injustices and cruelties of society and redeeming it: Jñāneśvar, Nāmdev, and Eknāth in Mahārāṣtra, Narsingh Mehta in Gujarat, Caitanya in Bengal, Kabīr in Uttar Pradesh, Vallabhācārya in Andhra and others. All these stirred the people with a new feeling of devotion, love and humanity. They stressed that one's religion was tested not by one's beliefs but by one's conduct. No heart which shuts out truth and love can be the abode of God.

At a time when men were conscious of failure, Nānak appeared to renovate the spirit of religion and humanity. He did not found a new faith or organize a new community. That was done by his successors, notably the fifth guru. Nānak tried to build a nation of self-respecting men and women, devoted to God and their leaders, filled with a sense of equality and brotherhood for all.

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[2] Nānak wrote: 'The age is a knife. Kings are butchers. They dispense justice when their palms are filled. . . . Decency and laws have vanished; falsehood stalks abroad. Then came Babar to Hindustan. Death disguised as a Moghul made war on us. There was slaughter and lamentation. Did not thou, O Lord, feel the pain ?'

III

The gurus are the light-bearers to mankind. They are the messengers of the timeless. They do not claim to teach a new doctrine but only to renew the eternal wisdom. Nānak elaborated the views of the Vaiṣṇava saints. His best known work is *Jap Sahib* or *Japji*, the morning prayer. Guru Arjun's popular composition is *Sukhmani*.

The Sikh gurus transcend the opposition between the personal and the impersonal, between the transcendent and the immanent. God is not an abstraction but an actuality. He is Truth, formless, *nirguṇa*, absolute, eternal, infinite, beyond human comprehension. He is yet revealed through creation and through grace to anyone who seeks him through devotion. He is given to us as a Presence in worship. The ideas we form of him are intellectualizations of that presence. A great Muslim saint observed: "Who beholds me formulates it not and who formulates me beholds me not. A man who beholds and then formulates is veiled from me by the formulation." It is the vice of theology to define rather than to express, to formulate rather than to image or symbolize the indefinable. Silence is the only adequate expression of that which envelops and embraces us. No word however noble, no symbol however significant can communicate the ineffable experience of being absorbed in the dazzling light of the Divine. Light is the primal symbol we use, of a consciousness ineffably beyond the power of the human mind to define or limit. The unveiled radiance of the sun would be darkness to the eye that strives to look into it. We can know it only by reflection, for we are ourselves a part of its infinite awareness.

Muhammad adopted the rigid monotheism from Judaism. "Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image nor any manner of likeness of anything that is in the heaven above or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth."[3] Rāmānanda was hostile to the worship of images. "If God is a stone, I will worship a mountain."

Kabīr says:

> The images are all lifeless, they cannot speak:
> I know, for I have cried aloud to them.
> The Purāṇa and the Qurān are mere words:
> Lifting up the curtain, I have seen.[4]

Nānak was greatly impressed by the monotheism of Islam and denounced image worship. One God who is just, loving, righteous, who is formless and yet the creator of the universe, who desires to be worshipped through love and righteousness—that is the belief that has dominated Sikhism. When at the temple of Jagannāth Nānak saw the worship in which lights were waved before the image and flowers and incense were presented on gold salvers studded with pearls, he burst into song:

> The sun and moon, O Lord, are thy lamps; the firmament
> thy salver and the oils of the stars the pearls set therein.
> The perfume of the sandal tree is thy incense; the wind
> is thy fan; all the forests are thy flowers, O Lord of light.

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[3] *Exodus*, XX. 3-4.

[4] Rabindranath Tagore's E. T.

God is not limited to any one incarnation but sends his messengers from time to time, to lead struggling humanity towards Him. It is the law of the spiritual world that whenever evil and ignorance darken human affairs, morality and wisdom will come to our rescue.[5]

The guru is the indwelling Divine who teaches all through the gentle voice of conscience. He appears outside in human form to those who crave for a visible guide. The enlightener is the inner self. Nānak is, for the Sikhs, the voice of God arousing the soul to spiritual effort. Faith in the guru is adopted by both the Hindus and the Muslim sūfis. The latter emphasize the need of a religious teacher, *pīr*, to guide the initiate in prayer and meditation. The gurus are human and not divine. They are not to be worshipped. Guru Govind Singh says: "Whosoever regards me as Lord shall be damned and destroyed...I am but the servant of God."

God alone is real. The world is real, because God animates it and is found through it. The created world is not in an absolute sense. It arises from God and dissolves into Him. How came the Changeless to create a world of change? How did the one go forth into the many? If the One is compelled to create, it suffers from imperfection and insufficiency. But total perfection cannot have this insufficiency. The question assumes that the Eternal at one moment of time began the task of creation. But Eternity has no beginning and no end. If its nature is to create, it eternally creates. The idea of a God absorbed in self-contemplation and then for some unknown reason rousing Himself to create a universe is but a reflection of our human state. We alternate between activity and rest, between inertia and excitement. Divine beatitude consists in a simultaneous union of contemplation and of act, of self-awareness and of self-giving. A static perfection is another name for death. Nānak looks upon the creative power of the Supreme as māyā. It is integral to the Supreme Being.

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[5] See *Bhagavadgītā*, IV, 7-8

IV

The way to the knowledge of God is through self-surrender. It is not ceremonial piety; it is something inward in the soul. Those who in the humility of a perfect self-surrender have ceased to cling to their own petty egos are taken over by the super-human Reality, in the wonder of an indescribable love. The soul rapt in the vision and possession of a great loveliness grows to its likeness. Surrender to God becomes easy in the company of a saintly teacher, a guru.

Man is a child of God. He is mortal when he identifies himself with the perishable world and body. He can become immortal through union with God; until then he wanders in the darkness of the world. He is like a spark from the fire or a wave of the ocean. The individual comes forth from God, is always in him as a partial expression of His will and at last, when he becomes perfect, manifests God's will perfectly.

We have to tread the path which saints have trodden to direct union with the Divine. We have to tread the interior way, to pass through crises, through dark nights and ordeals of patience. Nānak says: "Yoga is not the smearing of ashes, is not the ear-rings and shaven beard, not the blowing of conches but it is remaining unspotted amidst impurity; thus is the contact with Yoga gained."

Nānak was critical of the formalism of both the Hindus and the Muslims. He went to bathe in the Ganges as is usual with devout Hindus. When the Hindus threw water towards the rising sun as an offering to their dead ancestors, Nānak threw water in the opposite direction. When questioned, he said: "I am watering my fields in the Punjab. If you can throw water to the dead in heaven, it should be easier to send it to a place on earth." On another occasion, he fell asleep with his feet towards Mecca. An outraged Mulla drew his attention to it. Nanak answered: "If you think I show disrespect by having my feet towards the house of God, turn them in some other direction where God does not dwell." Nānak says: "To worship an image, to make a pilgrimage to a shrine, to remain in a desert, and yet have the mind impure is all in vain; to be saved, worship only the Truth." Nānak tells us: "Keep no feeling of enmity for anyone. God is contained in every bosom." Forgiveness is love at its highest power. Nānak says: "Where there is forgiveness there is God Himself."

When Ajita Randhava asked Guru Nānak about *ahiṁsā*, Nānak replied:

(1) Do not wish evil for anyone. This is *ahiṁsā* of thought.

(2) Do not speak harshly of anyone. This is *ahiṁsā* of speech.

(3) Do not obstruct anyone's work. This is *ahiṁsā* of action.

(4) If a man speaks ill of you, forgive him.

(5) Practise physical, mental and spiritual endurance.

(6) Help the suffering even at the cost of your life.

Belief in a separate self and its sufficiency is the original sin. Self-noughting is the teaching of the seers of all religions. Jesus says: "If any man would follow me, let him deny himself." Meister Eckhart declared that "the Kingdom of God is for none but the thoroughly dead". We should aim to escape from the prison of our selfhood and not to escape from body which is the temple of God. Until we reach the end we will have other lives to pass through. No failure is final. An eventual awakening for all is certain.

Nānak and his followers believe in the doctrine of *karma* and rebirth. We are born with different temperaments. Some are greedy and possessive, others fretful and passionate. We come into the world bearing the impress of our past *karma*. Circumstances may stimulate these qualities. We may by our effort weaken the evil dispositions and strengthen the good ones. True happiness cannot be found in perishable things. It is found only in union with the Supreme. We are caught in the world of *saṁsāra* or change, in the wheel of births and deaths because we identify ourselves with the physical organism and the environment. We can be freed from the rotating wheel of *saṁsāra* by a union with God attained through devotion. We must accept God as the guiding principle of our life. It is not necessary to renounce the world and become an ascetic. God is everywhere, in the field and the factory as in the cell and the monastery.

The Sikhs, like some other Vaiṣṇava devotees who preceded them, denounce caste distinctions. Rāmānanda said:

jāti panthi pūcchai nahi koi
hari ko bhaje so hari kā hoi.

(Let no one ask of caste or sect; if anyone worships God, then he is God's.) As God dwells in all creatures none is to be despised. When we become one with God through whole-hearted surrender we live our lives on earth as instruments to the Divine.

The aim of liberation is not to escape from the world of space and time but to be enlightened, wherever we may be. It is to live in this world knowing that it is divinely informed. To experience a timeless reality we need not run away from the world. For those who are no longer bound to the wheel of *saṁsāra*, life on earth is centred in the bliss of eternity. Their life is joy and where joy is, there is creation. They have no other country here below except the world itself. They owe their loyalty and love to the whole of humanity. God is universal. He is not the God of this race or that nation. He is the God of all human beings. They are all equal in His sight and can approach Him directly. We must, therefore, have regard for other peoples and other religions.

Nānak strove to bring Hindus and Muslims together. His life and teaching were a symbol of the harmony between the two communities. A popular verse describes him as a guru for the Hindus and a *pīr* for the Muslims.

Guru Nānak Shah fakir
Hindu kā guru, mussulman kā pīr.

V

The transformation of the peaceful followers of Nānak into a militant sect was the work of the sixth guru, Har Govind and of Guru Govind Singh, the tenth and last guru. The tenth guru converted the young community of disciples (sikhs, śiśyas) into a semi-military brotherhood with special symbols and sacraments for protecting them. When his father Guru Teg Bahadur was summoned by Emperor Aurangzeb who faced him with the alternative of conversion to Islam or death, he preferred death and left a message: "I gave my head but not my faith."

sir diyā pur sirrar na diyā.

His four sons also gave their lives in defence of their faith.

On the new year day in 1669, Guru Govind initiated five of his followers known as *Panj Piyaras* (five beloved ones) into a new fraternity called the *Khalsa* or the Pure. Of these five one was a Brahmin, one a Kṣatriya and the others belonged to the lower castes. He thus stressed social equality. They all drank out of the same bowl and were given new names with the suffix Singh (lion) attached to them. They resolved to observe the five K's, to wear their hair and beard unshorn (Keś), to carry a comb in the hair (Kangha), to wear a steel bangle on the right wrist (Kara), to wear a pair of shorts (Kaccha) and to carry a sword (Kirpan). They were also enjoined to observe four rules of conduct (*rahat*), not to cut their hair, to abstain from smoking tobacco and avoid intoxicants, not to eat kosher meat, and to refrain from sex adultery (a precaution to protect Muslim women from Sikh soldiers). A new script, a new scripture, new centre of worship, new symbols and ceremonies made Sikhism into a new sect, if not a new religion. What started as a movement of Hindu dissenters has now become a new creed.

It is, however, unfortunate that the barriers which the Sikh gurus laboured to cast down are again being recreated. Many pernicious practices against which they revolted are creeping into Sikh society. Worldly considerations are corrupting the great ideals. Religion which lives in the outer threshold of consciousness without conviction in the mind or love in the heart is utterly inadequate. It must enter into the structure of our life, become a part of our being. The *Upaniṣad* says: "He alone knows the truth who knows all living creatures as himself." The barriers of seas and mountains will give way before the call of eternal truth which is set forth with freshness of feeling and fervour of devotion in the *Ādi Granth*.

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